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THE
LAIRDS OF FIFE.

VELUTI IN SPECULUM.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE
LAIRDS OF FIFE.

CHAPTER I.

“ The sedentary stretch their lazy length
When custom bids, but no refreshment find,
For none they need. * * * * *

Not such th’ alert and active :

—————Spirits prompt to undertake,
And not soon spent, though in an arduous task ;
The powers of fancy and strong thought are theirs.”

COWPER.

Not in so beautiful and pleasing a habitation as Champ Fleury, but in the occupation of a similar system of goodness and benevolence, was Miss Leslie, when, in the quiet silence of the night, she was disturbed by the tumultuous arrival of a coach and horses, sent to drag her

away at all risks to the less contented tenement yelep'd Fife-hall. To shew cause:—Mrs Fife had returned from her expedition against the Lumberfield faction, her whole physical strength, as well as her whole mental forces, *hors de combat*; and, as the last expiring command of an enfeebled voice, had required that Sophia Leslie should be again made to come upon the carpet.

That young lady *did* come again upon the carpet, and just in time to enter upon the by no means easy duties of a consolatrix, a condolatrix, an answer-all, and a sick-nurse.

It would be improper, however, and not very decorous, to detail to the reader the many and strange ‘sayings and doings’ of our friend Mrs Fife, in that high state of delirious excitement caused by the effect of her fever and the loss of her senses;—we shall, therefore, rather abide the hopeful moment when, composedly cushioned in one of the softest fauteuils of the M^rFarlane repository, she had it at last in her power to confer upon her amiable friend and companion, some portion of the history of her subsequent adventures.

“Am I allowed to speak?” she exclaimed, untwisting from about her head and throat a set of happs that would have done honour even to Lady Lumberfield herself.

“Yes, yes, my dear Mrs Fife. Your Esculapius gives you five-and-twenty minutes, and trusts me to see that you do not upon any account ex——”

—“But would you like to hear me?” smartly interrupted Mrs Fife.—“Would you like to know how, without committing any one single crime, I came to be so nearly deprived of my life? You are aware of the circumstances, I presume?”

“My dear Mrs Fife, pray—pray do not agitate yourself.”

“Agitate myself! Wasn’t it Brown, wasn’t it Brown, wasn’t it Brown?”

“My dear Mrs Fife, if you talk so very fast, you will certainly be in danger of a relapse.”

“Well then, my dear, I shall speak more composedly. You know a place they call the North Queensferry, don’t you?”

“Yes; so called, as some allege, from Mary

Queen of Scots having crossed there on her flight from Loch Leven.

“ My dear, why *will* you always interrupt me? Mary Queen of Scots, too, is one of the people of whom we have surely heard enough. But wait till you hear the story of a still more wonderful embarkation. Do you know *now* whom I mean ?”

“ The Lumberfield party, perhaps.”

“ Just so ;—but pray let me get on. Well, Miss M‘Tavish and I were sitting demurely sipping our tea, when, just as I was raising my cup, down came the Lumberfield party with ten times more fury than the most terrible avalanche ; and, I believe, the damage occasioned must have been somewhat similar. In fact, in a single moment I saw ten or twelve horses thrown down, and I suppose killed ; two or three carriages dashed nearly to pieces ; and the back of an uncommonly handsome barouche stove in, by the pole of a large heavy coach hurled in upon them at the last.

“ In the midst of this disturbance, would you believe it, the whole party disappeared, leaving,

however, Colonel Brown behind, to tell me that every thing was occasioned by my folly ; and that he had himself smelt me out some five or six-and-twenty miles off. In the most inconceivable state of agitation and surprise, I called for Miss M'Tavish to help me, when, instead of Miss M'Tavish, came somebody to inform me, that she too was now half-way on her passage to the other side. This last shock was too much for my already distracted nerves. I suffered Colonel Brown to talk on without interruption ; allowed him even to turn me and my adventure into ridicule ; and then fainted away, just as he had left me to myself to go and give orders about his return to Bertie Castle. To conclude my catastrophe—I got into my own carriage as fast as I could ; dared Colonel Brown, who wanted to assist me, to approach ; forgot to settle matters with the landlord ; swooned, I think, three times on the road ; and was lifted out of my carriage into my bed !—*Now !*”

“ But was there really so much damage, my dear Mrs Fife ?”

“ O dear no, not nearly so much as I

supposed. I made the people of the inn tell me all about it, though I had scarce breath left to speak, and they could never understand what I said. But I have not done with Brown yet: What do you think he did?—Are you deaf, Miss Leslie?—What do you think he did?”

“ I cannot exactly guess, my dear Mrs”——

——“ Hush, tush ! You must let me proceed with my story : He actually bribed some of the bye-standers to give me false names of the parties whose carriages were broke ; and what do you think he called them ? But, stop : I had forgot to tell you, that he got a mob to nickname the whole lot ; and what do you think he called *it* ?”

Miss Leslie waited to be informed.

“ Two half-cousins of the Emperor of Morocco, travelling under the special protection of the Duchess of Puddledock and suite !”

“ My dear Mrs Fife, if you carry on at this rate, I am afraid your five-and-twenty minutes will prove rather too much for you.”

“ Nothing can be too much for me after Colonel Brown’s inventions to torment me. He

knew that I should detect the plot; but he was anxious, nevertheless, to shew me what he intended.—But are the five-and-twenty minutes really expired?”

“Not exactly, but”——

—“Well, well, it doesn’t signify. I wonder what has become of that marriage between Brown and Miss Methodical. And Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw,—did any body see *her*, I wonder, when she was last in this part of the world. Did you hear?”

“Yes; I merely heard.”

“Well, who was it? But pray, how long did she stay?”

“Only two days, I believe; but it seems she is soon to return again.”

“Ay, return again; bless me! But don’t you think I should keep quiet now for a little?”

“O dear no, my dear Mrs Fife. I rather think you require exercise of some sort; and if you can take it in this way, I should think it would be only very much in your favour.”

“Well, now, I differ from you, Miss Leslie;

I think weak people are best strengthened by being always left at rest."

"But *you* are not so very weak, surely?"

"O, very weak! But to anticipate all further discussion, I must inform you at once and for all, that I wish to sleep, and beg that you may not disturb me again for the next four-and-twenty hours at least."

"How delightful!" thought Miss Leslie, whom Mrs Fife's perpetual restlessness had deprived of all means of repose for the last five days. "Now I shall take her commands for my excuse for looking after a few of her own poor old pensioners."

Mrs Fife's own long sleep tended much to her revivification; and she now contrived to awake in a state of comparative convalescence. With this returning strength came the restitution of her faculties at large, and with them all, a fixed and irrevocable determination to penetrate *yet* into the secrets of the Lumberfield junto; and in this amiable and contented state of mind she suffered Miss Leslie to return once

more to her own home, and to the quiet fulfilment of her much-interrupted duties.

“How dull Lumberfield Castle must be!” she exclaimed, as that young lady got into the carriage to return to her aunt’s. “I think I must go and pay poor Lady Lumberfield a visit myself.”

“It may help to divert you, Mrs Fife.”

“You are right, my dear, it *will* serve to divert me. And, by the bye, isn’t this the last day of November? I believe I must go to-morrow, else I need never expect to Christmas in Edinburgh. But pray, my dear, how long do you expect to be upon the road?”

“O, not very long,” answered Miss Leslie, making the private signal to Jacob to be off, and perfectly aware of the string of questions in reserve.

“Jacob! Jacob! Miss Leslie wishes to speak with me, Jacob. O, gracious! the whole of them will be overset! But stay, I must see Mrs Gregory; much has to be inquired after before I can think of going to such a distance as that dreary-looking tabernacle Lumberfield Castle,

which old Mr M'Farlane used always to call 'a hearse upon a hill-top.'"

Mrs Fife paused; for Mr M'Farlane, amongst all his other eccentricities, had left behind him imperative orders that he should be carried to the grave in a hearse that went by steam, in order to prove, past all objections, the increasing usefulness of that invention; and it now occurred to her how faithfully she had obeyed his last scientific instructions. She composed herself, therefore, to commence forthwith, in quiet, her preparations for her design upon Lumberfield Castle.

While all then was sad, and gloomy, and mirk; and when the still silence of a remote, and at all times—excepting upon one grand occasion—lifeless solitude, had at length succeeded to the vast uproarious revels which had so long convulsed the sombre walls of heavy Lumberfield; that huge nest of the turbulent, but now of the stupid, received within its dull and gloomy courts that active piece of inquiry entitled Mrs Fife.

Nor did active Mrs Fife prove at all an unwelcome guest.

Lady Lumberfield had disliked the crowd, but still more the dead calm that had followed, as it were in contrast, after it. She now wanted somebody that could relieve her of the trouble of speaking; somebody who would and could inquire particularly after her complaints and elixirs; and somebody whose activity and intelligence had ferreted out some new and hitherto unheard-of description of broths, drops, sleeping-draughts, and cold-curing lozenges. Exquisitely identified, then, with all these hopeful anodynes, she had got Mrs Fife.

Both ladies, however, were destined to split upon a rock. Mrs Fife came avowedly and decidedly to accomplish herself in the perverse mysteries of the notorious Lumberfield faction. Lady Lumberfield, on the other hand, had been long disciplined in to defeat and elude her intentions. We shall see what advantages chance, amongst other things, will sometimes give in a war of perseverance.

The first night passed in mutual congratula-

tions and inquiries. “ Well, dear Lady Lumberfield, how is the cough ?” was Mrs Fife’s beginning.

Lady Lumberfield coughed.

“ Ah ! I see it’s very bad.”

Lady Lumberfield redoubled her exertions.

“ Ah ! and now I hear it. Pray, was it very bad after I bade you good-night ?”—for Lady Lumberfield had slept away the day.

Lady Lumberfield shook in Mrs Fife’s face a large head, hugely flapped with flannels.

“ Just so :—And pray, may I ask what you were last recommended for it ? It’s terrible indeed !”

“ I have got so many things, and make use of but so very few of them, that”——and Lady Lumberfield’s cough opportunely recommenced.

“ Your cough has increased, Lady Lumberfield, has it not ? I suppose it is the weather that so successfully stirs it up.”

Lady Lumberfield gave her vast head, and its still vaster appendages, another still more portentous shake.

“ Yes, as Dr Dabble-in-trash says,—‘ Sick people always make the best thermometers.’ ”

Lady Lumberfield gave an owl stare, as if she would have asked, ‘ Why, how, wherefore, and for what ?’

“ Because they always *tell* when there is a change. Well, I hope to-morrow may prove a good day ;—and talking of thermometers, will you permit me the gratification to know how *your* thermometer stands, Lady Lumberfield ?”

“ But what would you do with a thermometer, my good Mrs Fife ?” for Lady Lumberfield thought it now time to be a little upon the alert, it seems.

“ It’s such a long ride, Lady Lumberfield ; I really forget how often I asked the distance on my way hither the other day. And then my health has been so very bad of late, you know.”

“ All nonsense, Mrs Fife. Stay where you are.”

“ Do your friends the Aloofs, and the Maringles, and the Browns, meet often in a body here, Lady Lumberfield ?”

“ No,” said the party so appealed to, in that

soft quiet sort of shut sound, so frequently intended to shut out all farther information upon any one particular given point.

“How odd, that they all should have met by chance!” exclaimed the undaunted Mrs Fife. “How and for what purpose did it happen, do you suppose?”

“Indeed—I—am sure—I really——don’t—know,” said Lady Lumberfield in the midst of a yawn, the almost interminable extent of which was intended to act as a sort of correction rod over the volatile qualities of her guest, Mrs Fife.

“O, pray, my dear Lady Lumberfield, do not allow me to put you to any inconvenience. I was only sorry that they should all have travelled in good weather, and I in bad.”

“It was some business, I believe, of Colonel Brown’s,” returned Lady Lumberfield mildly, and now rather, if any thing, inclined to conciliate. “But, by the bye, have I told you about the Digestive Bi-Carbonate Lozenges?”

“O, pray, no; let me hear.”

“Or the genuine vegetable syrup of De

Velno?" continued Lady Lumberfield, without pretending to hear the response.

"No."

"Or Stirling's stomach-pills?" added her Ladyship.

"What will come next?" thought Mrs Fife.

"Well?"

"I am told they work miracles."

"But have you heard of the famous Squilla-pillacataplasystematica, Lady Lumberfield?"

"No," said Lady Lumberfield, likewise growing curious.

"Well, it both surpasses the bi-carbonate lozenges, the genuine vegetable syrup of De Velno, and the stomach-pills. And, if I am not mistaken, it was Dr Dabble-in-trash who attended Mr M'Farlane, and first gave the hint; though he designed no more at the time, I am told, than a trick to amuse and divert his patient."

"You must get it for me, my good Mrs Fife."

"Are you really serious about it, Lady Lumberfield?"

“ *Most* serious.”

“ Indeed ! Then when shall I ”—

Here the public entrée of a huge tray with five or six different sorts of slops, carefully swaddled in fine damask cloths, announced that Lady Lumberfield was now about to take the morning's rest ; for the night, like the day, had passed off in a contrary direction.

Mrs Fife prepared to obey the signal, by first taking a peep within the swaddle-cloths before the paraphernalia could reach its original destination.

“ Well, good-night, Mrs Fife ; and, pray, don't think of going to-morrow.”

“ Well, I shall try. But I can assure you, Lady Lumberfield, that it all very much depends upon circumstances.”

The morrow rained one of those predetermined sort of rains, which do not even admit the possibility of a hope.

Mrs Fife, however, gave out that she should depart.

Lady Lumberfield, therefore, determined that she should stay. In spite of all her endeavours

to appear upon her death-bed, her health had of late ostensibly and decidedly improved. She was now better than she had been for at least the last ten years; and though obliged, from decency, to imitate the manners of the dying, she had never felt more inclined to be alive. In this disposition, then, she saw nothing before her but her sick-nurse, in whom her pride would never at any time suffer her to confide; and should that blessing, Mrs Fife, go away, and at this dreary period of the year too, what sort of destiny was she next to expect? Even artifice—though Lady Lumberfield was confessedly very stupid—must be employed to retain so precious a prize; and Mrs Fife must accordingly be cajoled over with a hope that her expectations in a certain quarter were now at last to be realized.

In order to beguile the tedious morning hours, till weighty weary Lady Lumberfield should get up, Mrs Fife was eagerly toiling through the albums, the caricatures, the travels, the views, and the fancy-dolls, and other goods, the product of the last Ladies' Sale of Fancy-work; as well as all the other bijouterie of polite life,

handed in to Lady Lumberfield by her more vivacious friends, the Aloofs—not to mention the nick-nack *local*, such as unpolished pebble-stones, jasper, zinc, and in particular some corticated petrifications connected with old venerable Lumberfield itself,—when the lady proprietress of the place sent to request the honour of Mrs Fife's company in Lady Lumberfield's own lumberesome apartment.

“ Well, my good Mrs Fife,” Lady Lumberfield drawled forth; “ what's this I hear about your going away to-day? I really could not believe nurse when she told it me.”

“ My dear Lady Lumberfield, I feel the greatest desire imaginable to know all that's going on at Fife-hall.”

“ But in such a terrible day?—look at it, Mrs Fife.”

Mrs Fife very readily examined the horizon to the east, and then examined the horizon to the west.

“ Just the sort of heavy pitter-pattering day I wish, Lady Lumberfield. It is so convenient to travel in bad weather, for one cannot com-

fortably do any thing else. Much better, at all events, than in a fine smiling day to be left lagging along upon a coarse-looking high-road."

"But I have never got you told about the curious party I had here," said Lady Lumberfield, who now saw that it was necessary to make an effort.

Mrs Fife sat down.

"And now, my good Mrs Fife, tell me all about the Squillapillacataplasystematica." The excellencies of the Squillapillacataplasystematica were here intruded upon by a person in Mrs Nurse's employ, who came to say, that Mrs Fife's carriage waited in the court below to carry her off.

"You will give me leave, Mrs Fife, to send it away?"

"My dear Lady Lumberfield, why would you send it away?"—These words were easy and simple; nevertheless, they concentrated and embodied a host of questions and inquiries, of which none but Lady Lumberfield herself could comprehend or understand the ultimate intention.

Lady Lumberfield paused and hesitated. She saw that Mrs Fife was too eager in her pursuit to be now satisfied with another *ruse de guerre* like that of the preceding night; and that she was not only prepared, but determined, in her extremity, either to conquer or to fly. What was to be done? The wary cautions of the grand Aloofs, and, in particular, of Colonel Brown and his daughter Mrs Augustus Maringle, came awfully and fearfully athwart her; and then came—blessed be the stars which note the individuality of birth!—the all-prevailing consideration of her own comfort. She had done every thing for the Aloof family already, and there could not be any thing very wrong in proclaiming aloud their good fortune, even though it must necessarily expose the Browns to the premature resentment of their relations. But the Browns themselves would not have scrupled much to have sacrificed these said relations; and besides, were they not waiting in impatience for her Ladyship's own death?

“Send away your carriage, Mrs Fife,” she said, drawing a long breath, which announced

how much she was relieved by her determination to capitulate; “I have something particularly important to communicate to you. But you must first promise to prolong your stay for at least a week, for I talk so very slow, and have so little breath, that I shall require at least that time to dole out all that I have got to relate.”

“A week, Lady Lumberfield, is neither here nor there,” cried the delighted Mrs Fife, who comprehended at once what Lady Lumberfield intended. And she ordered the equipage to be dismissed; not, however, without a pretty sharp reprimand for having drawn up, to her annoyance, at least two minutes within the expected time.

Between her slops, drops, and lozenges, however, richly intermixed and mingled with a sleep of fourteen hours, and a phlegmatic cough; not to mention the solemn virtues of the squillapillacataplasystematica, and of some other of Mrs Fife’s wonderful recipes—Lady Lumberfield might have expended a year, in place of a week, in her heavy detail of all the little petty fact minutiae connected with the notorious

Lumberfield case, had not Mrs Fife proved a flapper of such very superior metal, as almost to overcome and bow down the opposition of impossibilities. In a word, her active questions supplied every possible defect; and drew forth in triumph to the light every analytical as well as abstract circumstance, identified with that vast, and hitherto, to her, impenetrable transaction.

Nay, further, to shew a tide in the affairs of women as well as men,—which, taken at the stream, leads on to fortune,—Mrs Fife and Lady Lumberfield grew to be the best and fondest friends in the world;—only, to the credit of philanthropy, much of this amitie originated in their mutual hatred of Colonel Brown; whom Lady Lumberfield feared, as all people do those who wait impatiently for their deaths; and Mrs Fife, as one of those impenetrable cross-bars which restrained her in her sole and only gratification—curiosity.

Mrs Fife, however, at last prepared to be gone. The intelligence communicated in Miss Hyndford's letter at Champ Fleury, respecting the settlement of the Ganders amongst the aristo-

crats of Fife, had already found its way into the dull halls of Lumberfield Castle; and she was, besides, very anxious to get removed a little nearer Colonel Brown's vicinity, the noise of whose flirtation with Miss Methodical, and his outré walks with her and her governess Mademoiselle Antoinette, had already reached to the farther boundaries of the kingdom. She went off, therefore, to the great grief of Lady Lumberfield, who had been now honoured with the toothache; and who was particularly to be delighted with the company of a person who could talk her to sleep; and to whom, under pretence of being deaf, she needed only to explain when she pleased.

CHAPTER II.

———Him there they found,
Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve,
Assaying by his devilish art to reach
The organs of her fancy, and with them forge
Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams.

Paradise Lost.

AT length, however, the thoughts of every one turned upon their winter-quarters, and, at the same instant, upon the modern Athens, which promised a more than ordinary “turn-out” of all the characters of our acquaintance. Amongst the rest the Ganders had flown off, followed at an hour’s notice by Miss Leslie and Mrs Fife. The Horn Regulars and Methodicals had kept to their appointed time. Some of the Lords had crossed over to their seats on the other side.

The Messrs Hyndford, the Honourable Mr Charles Suttie, and Sir George Terrorfield, were already deeply engaged in the formation mysteries of a “select early club,” limited to nine; and their friend, Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, had consented to open one of her “to be let furnished” houses in town. Even the grand Aloofs, the first week in January being past, had condescended to set themselves down next door at five-and-forty guineas a-month, merely to get rid of Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, to whom Colonel Brown had found it at last necessary to give up the possession of his D—— Place house. Sir Henry Maringle and his Lady had also arrived at their hotel,—the same which was to have the honour of entertaining the famous Monsieur Diabolique, just arrived from Singleton and Castle Aloof;—and the Right Honourable the Countess of Montgomery and daughter were expected early in the ensuing month. The fag end was filled up by the Lumsdaines, the rest of the world, and Captain Sham and the flimsy woman his wife, come to buy what was cheap in these bad times; and to make bleed a few of

those unfortunate wretches who had been compelled, for want of more distinguished or hospitable acquaintance, to accept of their trumpery cup of weak tea, while on a summer pilgrimage to that fallen-back Jerusalem yclep'd St Andrews. Even Mr Monotony had now confined his morning drives to the perpendicular streets of the Athens; and Madrake was again making the round of his numerous friends and acquaintances.

“I am afraid I am taking my annual cold, Miss Leslie,” said Mrs Fife, one unhappy-looking morning as she entered the breakfast parlour. “I am afraid Miss M'Tavish kept me up rather late last night; and then she had so much to say about that odd report of Colonel Brown being already privately married to Miss Methodical; and then that long story about Colonel Brown and Mrs Maringle refusing to see their friends the Markeilds, after having cheated them of their succession to the Bertie estate. But let me see that newspaper—how many was it yesterday that I read?—Stay, my dear, don't make the cups so full.—How many

did you say I had read?" Miss Leslie was going to say ten. "Did you count them?—But stop, stay, wait, have patience, till I read this." And Mrs Fife, pouncing in the first place upon the births, deaths, and marriages, read aloud, in a sort of hysterical scream, the following paragraph:—"Married, at the house of Sir James Methodical, Bart. ——— Row, Lieutenant-Colonel David Francis Brown, of Bertie Castle, Fifeshire, to Mademoiselle Harriette Antoinette"—here Mrs Fife repeated the name and took breath—"daughter of the late Henry Anthony Antoinette, merchant, Rue St ———, Paris."—"Pastrycook !!!" added Mrs Fife in wrath. "I made Charles Suttie search all Paris to find out the history of these same Antoinettes; for Mademoiselle was always such a flimsy piece of stuff that nothing satisfactory could ever be got out of her. Charles Suttie found them out; and I treated him with his expenses to Rome for his pains. But, pray, read you the paragraph, my dear Miss Leslie; for surely I must have made some strange, some awful mistake."

No; Colonel Brown had married Mademoiselle Antoinette. Had married her, too, in the very teeth of Miss Methodical—who, by the way, had employed herself in taking views of Bertie for the last six months, and in the very house of Sir James Methodical himself.

“Pray, Miss Leslie, order the carriage, and get me my happs.”

“My dear Mrs Fife, leave every thing to me and Miss M‘Tavish. You are too much indisposed, I assure you, to go abroad in such a day as this.”

“But I shall die at once if I do not get some speedy accounts of this strange marriage. You know—for I confess every thing to you, Sophia—that curiosity is my besetting sin. It was implanted in me from the first, and I have done every thing to nourish and increase it. A foolish care—for you see how triumphantly that man Brown has defeated it. I always feared some catastrophe in that quarter; and now that he has borne me to the ground, I shall keep my bed for the next ten weeks.”

“I hope so,” Miss Leslie could have said;

for the amiable and better parts of Mrs Fife's character had some leisure to develope themselves upon these occasions, since it had been a part of that lady's education to be quiet and submissive so soon as she found herself out of the troubled sphere of her own management. "O, nonsense, my dear Mrs Fife; but as you seem so very anxious—and in fact I feel very sensibly astonished myself—I shall set about obtaining every possible sort of information immediately.—But you don't eat any breakfast, my dear Mrs Fife."

Mrs Fife fastened upon her a sick and melancholy smile. "When you give me an appetite, Sophia," she said, "it will be time enough to eat."

Miss Leslie put on her manteau, and set out. She recollected, however, before she had gone a hundred yards, that Mr Madrake and the Markeilds were to dine that day with Mrs Fife; and she returned to state that circumstance as a means of information to the lady herself. "The Markeilds *ought* to know about this affair," she said; "and Mr Madrake, who knows every

thing, must by this time be provided with the necessary intelligence."

"My dear, when they come I shall have fifty other things to inquire about. In the mean time, I must know how Colonel Brown could have been so mad as to exchange Miss Methodical for Mademoiselle Antoinette; though to confess the truth, I think as little of the one as I do of the other. Will you have the carriage?"

No; Miss Leslie hoped to get quicker on without. And she set out once more after the eventful history of Mademoiselle Antoinette's marriage.

Mrs Fife, however, in spite of her at all times irresistible curiosity, repented, and sent a footman to recall her friend. Mrs Fife had no reason to regret this instance of her self-denial. In a few minutes a heavy rain drove in Miss M'Tavish, from whose garbled account of the matter, ferreted out of chairmen, upper servants, and ladies'-maids, the reader will please to be informed, that Colonel Brown had taken to wife the Mademoiselle out of no wild frolic; on

the contrary, it had been a love-standing affair for the last twelve months, and the true and only motive for his frequent visits to Methodical House, as well as of his outré walks in its vicinity. The Colonel had paid his devoirs at first merely from the vanity of complimenting a young and fashionably-dressed Miss, who in return was to make him believe himself still handsome. But coming to the truth, that the young lady—now by the bye a little beyond her prime—really seemed to view him with a very peculiar degree of interest, and taking it into his head that really so fine a man should marry, he drew forth the mystic secret that he was beloved. Colonel Brown had other motives to influence him in carrying on the deception. He wished to get rid of the Lumberfield and other transactions; and at the same time to indulge himself in what he considered to be one of the greatest pleasures of existence, viz. a love courtship. He saw, too, that Miss Methodical, though she assumed to herself the merit of his gay attentions, constantly talked of every thing *but* love; while her papa and mamma seemed always

more inclined to be careful of her interests after she should become a widow, than at all interested concerning her situation as a wife. In other respects, too, a marriage with Miss Methodical would have proved extremely irksome and inconvenient. He had settled every thing upon Mrs Augustus Maringle; Lady Lumberfield was still alive; and the West India property, of which so much had been said, would have proved nothing in the eyes of a family who avowedly sought for their daughter an advantageous establishment. With Mademoiselle Antoinette, on the other hand, he should enjoy the prerogative of always being looked up to. She was willing, he had ascertained, to accept, by way of dower, whatever he should be pleased to grant, and was not at all ambitious of either pin-money or an equipage—at least so she professed.

Like all close men, however, Colonel Brown had gone on to deceive the Methodicals, with the assistance of his sweetheart, up to the very last moment. A conversation with Sir James Methodical himself, at the end of his first Tues-

day dinner, seemed to be not only the best, but the speediest mode of effecting an *eclaircissement*. In this tête-à-tête Colonel Brown appeared only anxious to study the interests of Miss Methodical; announced his intention of applying the rents of the Lumberfield estate for the purpose of insuring his life in favour of Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle; affected to have ascertained, for the first time, the extent of his losses in the West India concern; and when Sir James Methodical magnanimously declared, that he only wished to have his daughter for a neighbour, knocked the nail on the head by declaring, that he had already appointed to marry Mademoiselle Antoinette before the termination of the week.

Not so much shocked that Colonel Brown should not marry his daughter, as that he should marry his daughter's governess, Sir James Methodical, in this dilemma, begged to have the advice and assistance of Lady Methodical herself.

Lady Methodical did *not* wish to marry her daughter, *merely* that she might become her

neighbour; and as Colonel Brown had never consulted formally on the subject, her surprise was not so very excessive. In the end, neither she nor her husband could endure the idea, that Mademoiselle Antoinette, or any body else, should elope from their house; and therefore wisely offered to give all due *éclat* to the match, by consenting to honour it with their auspices. They even negociated, that Miss Methodical should appear as bride's-maid, arrayed in a new suit of pearl with diamond clasps, as a small mark of Colonel Brown's intrinsic regard for the young lady, as well as of his great respect for the Methodical family at large.

With Mrs Augustus Maringle, Colonel Brown was, happily, no less successful. "My dear Cecilia," he began, after having given orders that she should await his return from Lady Methodical's after her own return from Lady Aloof's, "I believe that you are already convinced, that my whole life has been employed in promoting your happiness, your prosperity, and your interests. I trust, therefore, that you will not refuse me your countenance and support, in

a matter which so nearly concerns me as a second marriage. That I have bequeathed every thing to you that it was in my power to bequeath, may at least convince you, that I only intend—now since you are taken from me—some little improvement in my domestic economy.”

Mrs Maringle took her father’s hand : “ My dear papa ! I should be the most ungrateful of daughters were I to throw any obstacles in the way of your happiness ; *only* I could have wished it to have been any *other* person than Miss Methodical,—for you know, papa, I could not shut my ears against every report.”

“ For Miss Methodical, Cecilia, read Mademoiselle Antoinette.”

“ Mademoiselle Antoinette!!!!” and Mrs Maringle stood as if petrified by the blow.

“ She will be easier managed than the other,” said her father, with emphasis, “ and she will not make much by her marriage. She has no rich unmarried brother in a decline, as your mother had, and we will treat her accordingly.”

“ But, papa,” said Mrs Maringle, becoming

very pale, “consider—she was—she was my governess. And then Lord and Lady Aloof”—

“My dear, you and I ought only to appear to be the better acquainted with her worth; and as for the Aloofs, confess, Cecilia, though you admire, you really do not love them.”

“I love nobody but you, papa; and you are going to give me my governess for a step-mother.”

“Then, my dear, you will see that same beloved papa, so much esteemed for his honour, pursued, and publicly slandered for his breach of promise.”

“Then, papa, you must have your own way of it.”

“No, Cecilia; never, without your previous consent and approbation.”

“Well, papa, frankly and freely, you have both.”

“You are still my own Cecilia!” exclaimed her father, affectionately embracing her. “Know, my love, that I marry Mademoiselle Antoinette, principally as an excuse for retiring to that little rustic cottage ornée, with which I have divert-

ed myself so much of late, there to vegetate in quiet till Lady Lumberfield's demise; and that, in order that you and Augustus may have Bertie now and for ever henceforward to yourselves. No *other* wife would have come into an arrangement, which was so effectually to compromise her own personal dignity and interests in the matter."

Mrs Maringle beamed forth once more in smiles, and wiped away a tear that had *instanter* started at the idea of any abasement to her consequence. She should have the pleasure of keeping at Bertie Castle all her husband's dogs and saddle-horses around her,—perhaps she should keep a pack; and she should have the superlative felicity of entertaining the Lord Viscount and Viscountess Aloof, Miss Lætitia Alicia, and the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick, in state. Influenced by these considerations, she agreed to follow the example—and she liked nothing better—of Sir James and Lady Methodical, in honouring with her entire and cordial support her father's very hasty marriage, with the expedition of which she

was now so far satisfied, that it left no time for the supercilious neglect of the Aloofs, who might afterwards be pacified when they saw that they were not likely to be committed.

Le vrai n'est pas toujours vraisemblable. That family, as shall be seen, hailed Colonel Brown's love-marriage with the greatest possible satisfaction. They had repented, now since the object had been obtained, of one and all of their condescensions at Lumberfield Castle; had repented of being the first of the company at all Colonel Brown's dress parties; had repented of having adopted, for ever so short a time, as their associates, Mrs Augustus Maringle, and Sir Henry Maringle's second son, her husband. They longed, in a word, for an opportunity of declaring aloud, that they really knew nothing of the Browns; and for the blissful opportunity of getting rid of all the before-mentioned annoyances at once. On the very day, then, on which Mrs Fife was to receive Mr Madrake, and Colonel Brown's other friends the Markeilds, the Aloofs were awaiting in grave severe austerity the arrival of Miss Hyndford of Hynd-

shaw, the Honourable Mr Charles Suttie, the English Marchioness of Touchmenot, Sir George Terrorfield, and Monsieur Diabolique. —Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle, it being the second day after the Colonel's marriage, had sent their excuses.

The importance of the parties; their Chinese phrases and long pauses; the vast deliberation of the Aloofs themselves, and the quiet monotony that preceded the arrival of Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, who, though the frankest amongst the set, had taken advantage of residing next door to see that all the company were arrived before her, prevented us from making very much of the conversation that occurred. The dinner itself passed off in the same style of funereal procession. The Marchioness of Touchmenot, in a fit of freakish affectation for the homely and social, would eat, and consequently dine, off nothing but roast goose; and the rest of the company, extolling the merits of both her and their own condescension, would follow her example. In the same vein, nobody would taste of the costly wines and luscious liqueurs that

were handed round from time to time in solemn shew; and a young footman, who had lost or torn both his pairs of skin-coloured cotton gloves, was civilly dismissed i' th' int'rim from the service.

While an elaborate dessert, however, was placing, or being placed, on the table—selectly sentinelled by a dozen of half-sized tumblers and water caraffes, and followed by all the corresponding *materiel* of many wines and many glasses, as well as by two after dishes of roasted chestnuts, happed in a labyrinth of white puckered damask clothes—Lady Aloof introduced the “happy pair,” by way, we presume, of a little hymeneal garnish.

“There has happened such a curious marriage amongst us,” she said, addressing her principal guest Lady Touchmenot.

“Amongst *us*, mamma?” interrogated Mr Charles James Ferdinand Frederick, with a look which, though glassed in smiles, was notwithstanding one of wrath; and who, in this sanctorum of *paisible* parade, could be heard,

though he spoke very low, from the other end of the table.

“ Yes, Charles James, amongst us. Have you forgot our *aides-de-camp*, Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle ?”

Charles James took up his silver fruit-fork, and fixing his dull grey eyes upon the lamp chandelier, compressed his ugly lips in a manner that expressed every thing, and yet meant nothing; one of those mystified faces, the vague spirit of which can only be ascertained by means of frequent intercourse with the owners.

“ Mrs Maringle keeps entirely with her husband’s family,” observed Lady Aloof with more gravity. “ You know Sir Henry and Lady Maringle, Lady Touchmenot ?”

“ Sir Henry Maringle ?” repeated Lady Touchmenot slowly, and pretending to think : —“ O, yes; they visited me at Bath.”

“ Brown’s marriage, I am told, has played the devil at the Club,” called Sir George Terrorfield, coming it thunder after Lady Touchmenot’s whispering lisp. “ Can *you* give us any information on the subject, Lady Aloof ?”

“ I know nothing of Colonel Brown, Sir George,” replied Lady Aloof, hurt :—“ He is never here.”

“ It seems the bride was taken out of Lady Methodical’s,” continued Sir George, applying his toothpick ; and now prepared, after having obtained her Ladyship’s mind in the matter, to run the parties down full cry.

“ Compelled by her husband, I suppose,” said Lady Aloof, allowing herself to be helped to half a glass of water.

“ Well, I don’t look upon Lady Methodical as a person to be compelled, Lady Aloof. But, I fancy, the fact of the matter was, the Methodicals wanted to get quit of the girl, and took in poor Brown upon that very account.”

Lady Aloof turned to Lady Touchmenot to talk about something else ; afraid, perhaps, lest her own dignity should inadvertently be compromised along with Lady Methodical’s.

Her son, however, did not wish that the family should appear to be so very intimately acquainted with the person thus depreciated. “ What sort of a man is Brown ?” he demand-

ed, addressing Sir George Terrorfield; for that young gentleman, like a genuine ingrate, had been always engaged whenever Colonel Brown had done the family the *dishonour* of paying them a visit. “I believe I met him once at my aunt Lumberfield’s.”

“Why, he seemed always to me a very harmless, good-natured, inoffensive sort of body,” replied Sir George, now talking with the most amiable indifference. “Suttie, there, knows him intimately.”

“Intimately, Sir George? *Diable*, defend me.”

Monsieur Diabolique, so called upon, looked up. He had been culling choice fruit for Miss Aloof and Miss Hyndford, and which, in order to secure his attention more entirely to themselves, they pretended from time to time to find fault with.

“Am I intimate with a man they call Brown, Diabolique; the same they have married the other day to Miss Methodical’s governess?”

“Vous parler trop haut, M. de Soottie—M. de Soottie, vous parler trop haut,” returned

Monsieur Diabolique, placing his own little hand upon his own little ear, after the fashion of a speaking trumpet. “My Lord Aloof, more fruit—if you please.”

“More fruit, Mr Diabolique! aren’t the tables full?”

“*Que ferons nous,*” said Mr Diabolique with a shrug, and turning disconsolately towards his friends, Miss Aloof and Miss Hyndford. “You see that we are to have no more of *de fruit*.”

“Console them rather with little Miss Methodical’s disappointment, Diable,” cried Charles Suttie, breaking away for a moment from a conversation in which he had just engaged with Mr Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof.

“Mr Suttie, in my opinion the young lady made an escape,” said Miss Aloof, who had a mind to be Lady Terrorfield.

“And I am surprised that young ladies marry at all, Mr Suttie,” added Miss Hyndford, who had some thoughts of becoming still more popular with that archangel of darkness, Monsieur Diabolique—

“And they’re as kind as inkle weavers.”

Lady Aloof half rose from her seat. The company were beginning to get rather animated, she thought; and the young persons—amongst whom she reckoned Miss Aloof, aged twenty-seven, and Miss Hyndford, aged forty-one—were beginning to talk a little out of order. Lady Touchmenot followed her august example. Miss Hyndford separated herself with considerable brusquerie from Monsieur Diabolique, who, while he tempted his ugly Eve with an apple, had possessed himself of the stray bud of a gum-flower, which, inconveniently perched upon the extreme back of the fair nymph's head, had pirouetted into her fruit-plate;—and the ladies dispersed.

Lady Touchmenot's carriage had already been announced. Lord Touchmenot had gone to—we shall not say where—on business of great political consequence; and Lady Touchmenot could not trust herself with being late, the more especially as her escort consisted of only one man and a pair of job-horses. Under these disheartening circumstances Lady Aloof could only hasten her away: Miss Hyndford, however,

remained. The people below were all to her taste, and Lady Aloof gave herself up to the happiness which her situation suggested. Certain duties were sometimes thrust upon her through the day. Persons of unknown reputation would sometimes keep the pavé under her very windows; all sorts of business-people would make themselves be heard in her house; and individuals of fashionable assurance would make themselves be heard in her presence. At night, however, blinds, shutters, curtains closed; the particular parties to be admitted correctly ascertained, and the less select shut out; there remained only the sacred sofa, agreeably recessed from the fire-light of the second withdrawing-room, and the spectacle of her own vast and unapproachable importance.

That Lady Aloof's vast and unapproachable importance was at *all* times sufficiently estimated, we shall appeal to the testimony of the partisans she had just left below.

“ Well, there is really no pleasure without the women,” cried Charles Suttie, talking with-

out being heard, and filling his glass to a bumper for the first time. "A man's business should be all got through in the half-hour between dressing and going out to ride."

"Why, I don't know, Soottie," yawned Monsieur Diabolique, imitating his example in the bumper; "but I think when one dines, one should see that the ladees, as you call them, should, *premièrement*, be provided for."

"Bundled off out of the way, I suppose, Monsieur?"

"As you say it—as you say it;" and the hitherto loquacious and complimentary Monsieur Diabolique fixed his little pug face in the attitude which ordinarily belongs to that very dignified appellation,—a twisted neck.

"What terrible exertions poor Miss Hyndford makes to keep up," exclaimed Charles Suttie, who was in conversation, as in every thing else, generally governed by fits and starts, and whom chance had now seated "cheek by jowl" with large tremendous Sir George Terrorfield. "Really, the *finesse* of having five grey

hairs in a set of ringlets, is, unluckily, not destined in such hands to succeed."

"And then, the flowers look so bad upon a thin soil," returned Terrorfield.

"I like the married women best," rejoined Charles Suttie, again going off at a tangent. "You sat opposite Lady Touchmenot, didn't you, Terrorfield?"

"Fine woman, but not pretty," said Sir George Terrorfield.

"But was there nobody else?—Charles James, hand me these figs."

"Yes," replied Sir George Terrorfield, leaning forward with both elbows made to rest upon the table, so as to get more directly to the teeth of his companion in tattle Charles Suttie. "We had *the* Lady Aloof—ugly as sin, and disagreeable as the fumigated cabin of a Dutch fishing-smack."

"So much for Terrorfield's grand pattern of female excellence!"

"Nothing, however, more correct, Charles. When we see a pretty woman, an agreeable woman, a witty woman, or a lovely woman,

then may be the time to laugh, flirt, and frolic; but when we would dine with decorum, ride abroad in a coach, or promenade at an assembly, such women are invaluable.—In fact, Lady Aloof is the very person to whom I should wish to introduce my wife, were that wife a woman of birth, and a woman of fashion.”

“You have heard what majesty is without the externals, I suppose,” cried Charles Suttie, to whom a little wine gave sometimes a little *forte*. “The air, the gait, the tone, the tact, of my Lord Aloof—are all in keeping, all good. And yet, take away from him a certain noble pedigree, and nineteen thousand pounds a-year, would you not take him, there as he sits, for one of the stuck-up figures of a travelling wax-work?—*Ecce homo*,—behold the man!”

“Suppose, then, we have a song from the ladies,” returned Sir George, who grew tame in proportion as Charles Suttie grew fierce. “Let us leave Lord Aloof, and the other automaton Charles James, to swell the consequence of great, big, little, Monsieur Diabolique!”

Sir George Terrorfield and Charles Suttie left behind them three of the most celebrated and successful professors of selfism in the known, or perhaps in the unknown world. The two Aloofs, scarcely sensible, and not very willing to *be* sensible, of any other gratification than the contemplation of their own worthlessness, sat silent, stiff, and starched, administering all the while with measured formality to their own mere animal wants. Monsieur Diabolique, with more cunning, and with much more dexterity, sat regaling himself *ad libitum*. His idiosyncrasy consisted in catering for himself the nectar luxuries of the best and most *recherché maître de la maison*, and with as great an eye to his own peculiar dignity and comfort as either of the Aloofs. His second talent consisted in provoking, mortifying, and thwarting those less dexterous children of Adam, whom chance was not to favour with the advantage in a competition. The Aloofs, however, were too cold, too frigid, and too abstracted, to feel themselves at any time *punished*; and as their influence was respected in the absence of better and brighter stars, and

as their disposition might, in some points, be likened very nearly to his own, Monsieur Diabolique was content to keep their company in silence, and to look upon them as persons entitled at present to the very first place in his consideration. Three long quarters of an hour, therefore, did restless, wicked, mischievous Diabolique sit quiet and content, under the corresponding auspices of the two icicled Aloofs. At last a change of wines, and a gurgling amongst the small tumblers of the caraffes, announced that the parties now inclined to join the ladies.

They found Lady Aloof alone upon the sacred sofa ; Miss Hyndford at the piano-forte in the other room, accompanied by Miss Aloof, who cordially detested her ; and backed by Charles Suttie and Sir George Terrorfield, who liked music for the opportunity it afforded for a little of that philandering persiflage so congenial to the tastes of the vivacious ; and which constituted, according to the fiat of Monsieur Diabolique, the only real charm of female society.

Of course, Miss Hyndford was talking, not

playing; and that under the benign care of Charles Suttie, who would not consent that Miss Hyndford should fatigue herself with more than *one* song. Miss Aloof was now requested to favour—and we know to our cost what sort of a *favour* we get sometimes conferred upon us—the company. But that lady made it a point never to appear so professional as to play before any body. She did not, however, condescend to explain herself upon the subject, and kept both men—who *thought* they had heard her play and sing before—teasing her with compliments and solicitations; the more gratifying, as they tormented Miss Hyndford, who had not evacuated her seat, and who was ready, at a moment's notice, to sing for the rest of the party, and for the rest of the night.

The superior dexterity of Monsieur Diabolique, Miss Hyndford imagined, would soon decide in *her* favour; and in this hope she called Monsieur Diabolique to her side, under the specious pretext, however, of prevailing with Miss Aloof.

“ *Allez, mon ami, tu ne connais pas ces gens-*

là!” as Bonaparte said of the Austrians. Monsieur Diabolique discovered the *ruse*, and seizing the happy opportunity for tormenting her, he continued, as a matter of course, to feast his eyes at leisure upon her discontent.

“ So, you will not press Miss Aloof to sing, Mr Diabolique ?” exclaimed Miss Hyndford, who only meant herself.

Monsieur Diabolique continued to regard her with a look, which seemed to pierce her through and through.

“ Well, then, I must go and join Lady Aloof.”

“ And leave me to my sorrow ?” cried Monsieur Diabolique, whose apt eyes could discover that the other two men, wearied at last of their own gab, were now upon the point of veering round to Miss Hyndford ; and assuming the air pathetic, he drew forth as if from his heart, but in fact from his waistcoat-pocket, the little bit of captured gum-flower, so cleverly pilfered during the bustle of the dessert.

“ That is a flower, Monsieur, which will never fade !” softly lisped Miss Hyndford, who thought a little *tendresse* as becoming as a few

false curls; and she sighed a sigh, laden only with retaliation upon the now about to be deserted Miss Aloof.

Monsieur Diabolique raised his eyes devoutly to the five grey-haired locks, as if to intimate that *these* were flowers which were never to fade. Miss Hyndford's vanity, however, a match for her intelligence, saw in their quaint sinister expression only a sublime mark of praise and secret admiration.

“Yes, Monsieur; the most perfect charms are made only to decay and wither. You know that song of Moore's—‘All that's bright must fade?’”

Monsieur Diabolique still kept his eyes upon the five.

“The words are set to an Indian air; in my opinion, the prettiest of the set.”

“Pray do let's hear it,” cried Sir George Terrorfield, who saw a card-table at which no one was requested to sit down.

But Miss Hyndford's evil genius had fastened her to the misguiding wiles of Monsieur Diabolique.

“It is too melancholy, perhaps,” she observed, still addressing that infernal, and quite happy now to have the opportunity of slighting Sir George’s so long withheld request. And that gentleman walked away, after the example of Miss Aloof—who had abruptly withdrawn, in order that she might the better confer upon her adversaries the mortification of being first deserted—leaving Charles Suttie to second Monsieur Diabolique and the devil in his sport.

“Not *all* that’s bright must fade?” simpered Diabolique, carrying his inquisitive little eyes round the whole bandeau of artificial locks. “The words of the song do not say *all* that’s bright must fade, Mademoiselle, eh?”

“Charles Suttie, pray what are you smiling at?” replied Miss Hyndford, who, though engrossed with Monsieur Diabolique, could yet find time to look about her. “But I was a fool to forget that, like some persons who are born without any ear for music, you were born without any taste for sentiment.”

“It is only, all that is *not* bright that must fade, I should rather think,” continued Mon-

sieur Diabolique, resting his little active orbs at length upon the last bunch of Miss Hyndford's own fair hair:—Pray, repeat us the first two lines."

"Listen then," returned Miss Hyndford gravely, and looking upon Charles Suttie as a distraction both to herself and to Monsieur Diabolique. "I think the words are these,—

"All that's bright must fade, the brightest still the fleetest;
All that's bright was made, but to be lost when sweetest."

"Ah! ah! ah! Mademoiselle, there it is—But to be lost when sweetest.—These words, however, have a still happier signification in the Latin," continued Monsieur Diabolique.

"In the Latin, Monsieur! Sure Tom Moore never wrote any thing in the Latin?"

"No, Mademoiselle; but then, the ancients may have given him a hint. You will sing the Latin ones for me, won't you?"

"Shall be most happy!" said Miss Hyndford, triumphing once more in the virtue of opportunities. And the unfortunate nymph, prompted on by the evil spirit of Monsieur Diabolique,

sung aloud two lines of an epigram of Martial's, the translation of which, according to Elphinston, was no other than—

In vain, fond Philenis——

(Here the eyes of Diabolique sparkled fire.)

In vain, fond Philenis, thou woo'st my embrace :

Bald, carotty, one-eyed, thy tripartite grace !—&c. &c.

Miss Hyndford finished with a long shake, which shook the tripartite graces, the false ringlets, the artificial flower, and the tuft ; and shook the sides of both Charles Suttie and Monsieur Diabolique. Luckily the rest of the party were gone to pay a visit to Lady Aloof.

“ There is something not right here,” thought Miss Hyndford, as she partly turned from the instrument. Her newly awakened suspicions saw, in the eyes of Monsieur Diabolique, a light that danced with a glee which her mere singing and playing could scarcely have excited. Charles Suttie, in despair, was laughing without restraint in his handkerchief.

Miss Hyndford rose hastily from the piano-

forte, and hurried towards the sacred sofa of Lady Aloof. She felt at first as if she were going to choke; but the remorse she now experienced at having suffered herself to be thrown off her guard, occurred to intercept any more tender or pathetic sensations; and in the words *not* of Hudibras,—she hoped to live to sing another day.

Neither Charles Suttie, however, nor Monsieur Diabolique, had any serious intention of insulting Miss Hyndford; and they accordingly contrived that she should overhear them lay the blame entirely upon her very Englified pronunciation of the Latin.

Miss Hyndford excused Monsieur Diabolique because he was a *refined* man; but she had no such charity to extend to Charles Suttie, whom she had heard whisper Monsieur Diabolique more than once; and whose explanations to Sir George Terrorfield and the Honourable Charles James Aloof, shewed so great a desire to prolong the entertainment at her individual expense. She went away, therefore, leaving Charles Suttie to get “done out,” on his road

home, of thirty pounds at cards; Sir George Terrorfield to knock somebody down; and the noble family of Aloof to a select number of inveterate headaches.

“ To the devil you shall go, I leave you now with sorrow,
And those he kindly spares to-day, he'll roast them well
to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III.

“ I do believe in thee ! Thou art the spirit
Of whom I long have dream'd, in a low garb.”

Werner, a Tragedy.

THE rest of the opening dinners of the season ended very much in the manner of the one we have just attended at Lord and Lady Aloof's; that is to say, every body returned to their own homes more or less annoyed, and more or less disappointed. To these succeeded a round of regular parties; and then, and not till then, began the balls, the soirées, the professional and other concerts, the Thursday evening assemblies, the patronized nights, and the card and dancing routs of the *Magnates*. Colonel Brown in the mean time had carried off his new wife to his cottage ornée at Bertie Castle, leaving his daughter and son-in-law in town to dine the

Aloofs by themselves, and to be received in the same private manner in return ; for the Aloofs were known to entertain, while in town, a few, and only a few, particular friends every day. Madrake, all this while, was doing his utmost to fulfil his usual engagements amongst all sets ; and, by dint of multiplying himself by activity, kept the ear at the same time of both Mr Monotony and Mrs Fife. He had other favourites : he had acquainted himself with the merits of Mrs Fife's left-handed relations, the Logans ; was become more interested than ever in the destinies of the Edmonstones ; and had just waited upon the Lady Juliana Montgomery and her mother the Countess.

According as the Methodicals had lost ground on the occasion of their friend Mademoiselle Antoinette's marriage, the mighty Horn Regulars, by means of the part they, in conjunction with their agents and namesakes, acted in the Lumberfield plot, had grown into favour with the grand Aloofs. They had dined there twice ; and, on the last occasion, had been permitted to approach the table in company with

three Earls, a Countess, a Marquis, and a Duke. It might have been chance; it might have been design; it might have been accident; but the Aloofs had always either been previously engaged, or felt themselves too much indisposed, to return one or other of the visits.

There are people, and we were a long time before we could believe it, who will not condescend to sup at the same house in which they are accustomed to dine; nor will they yet be persuaded to dine in some other quarter, where they may be accustomed to appear in the evening. If we were to look after an economical explanation, we should find, that there is only a certain set, whom another certain set will dine.

Lord and Lady Aloof, however, were not persons who wished to be gay upon little; or desired to become *prima donnas* in fashion, in spite of the vast defects contained in a small income. No; they acted upon all occasions under the influence of caprice, assisted by pride, ostentation, and hauteur. They would not, or could not, determine upon going to a house where they

were likely to meet other twenty human beings—for, with Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle they might do as they pleased—and to hesitate was always a sign that they were also to be lost. They too, however, had been taught, that people could live without them. Several persons of noble birth had forgot to return their call, when passing to, through, or from the sister country; and several men of talent had unequivocally declined the small benefit that was to be derived from their cold pompous dinners. It was prudent, therefore, not to throw off the Horn Regulars too rashly, and a council was now held for the purpose of making them some amends for their own late repeated defections. At last the house of Aloof decided; and Miss Lætitia Alicia was requested to pay Mrs Horn Regular a morning visit; in the course of which she was to drop a hint—as it were by accident—that Lady Aloof would like very well to look in for a little upon one of that Lady's "baby-balls."

This piece of condescension set the Horn Regulars likewise a cogitating. It was in the

evening, then, that they must expect to be honoured by such an august presence; and an evening dress party must accordingly be got up: for what satisfaction could proud Lady Aloof—whose family were all grown—find in seeing a set of noisy children dance? Mrs Horn Regular had already got through both her baby-balls, and was to hold her last card-party on the following night. Her dress dinners had also elapsed on the stated days, and nothing remained but those family parties, those everlasting Wednesdays, for the benefit of so grand a reception. A full card of ceremony was accordingly written out; another for the Miss, and a third for the master; and forthwith despatched, “neck or nothing,” to the much respected Residenz of the Lord Viscount Aloof.

“Mrs Horn Regular requests the honour,”
&c. &c. &c.

“Monday evening, the 19th March, 10 o’clock.”

From seven till eleven had been the usual style announced in the *programme* of Mrs Horn Regular’s baby-balls. The Aloofs, therefore,

saw all that was intended for them. They had already, perhaps, digested the absurdity of taking their places on one of the little green forms of a baby-ball; or of being mistaken for one of those privileged bundles of elderly persons, whose extreme familiarity with the family entitled them to the entrée upon all such puny occasions. They were pleased, therefore, that the Horn Regulars had had the *tact* to understand them; and they would send their acceptances in due time. Nay, further, they would arrive punctual to the hour of ten, and would leave precisely at eleven; a resolution which was seconded by another, that Miss Aloof should keep free from colds, and Mr Charles James from engagements. Lord Aloof himself would put himself in the way of one of the Horn Regular regular dinners, and would carry away invites for Monsieur Diabolique, and as many other friends as they pleased. A quadrille might thus be formed for Miss Aloof, composed entirely of her own suite; and with this management, the ball, or party, might perhaps be enjoyed.

In three days, Mrs Horn Regular's dress party, to which Lady Aloof and her daughter had already given the name of select, was the topic of conversation in every fashionable party in town. Who were to be there, and who were not, excited almost the same feverish degree of terror and anxiety, as one of those bloody catastrophes which occurred during the most sanguinary times of the French Revolution. Mrs Horn Regular acted with nerve. She cut off a few, and encouraged all the rest. Nay more, she would dine a set of men for the next three weeks, who could be of no use to her ball, yet whom she might otherwise have been necessitated to ask ; and she would send a card to Miss Sophia Leslie, merely to oblige Mrs Fife. Further—she would keep on all her carpets for the comfort of the Aloofs. Several persons of professional celebrity should attend to act as a counterpoise to the dancing. The ante-rooms should contain card-tables. A supper-table or sideboard should be spread in the dining-rooms for the men to drink at ; and trays after trays, with jellies, cakes, ices, fruits, *cau sucre*, &c. &c.

&c. &c. should succeed each other in endless succession in the style of refreshments. Lady and Miss Aloof always went away before supper. It was better, therefore, to beguile them into it; while, mayhap, so timeous a display of substantials might give them courage to face the crowd for another hour or so beyond the time their dignities might have prescribed for themselves.

An assembly had been held on the Thursday. The fashionable world had gone to a concert on the Friday. Saturday had been devoted, as usual, to juvenile parties and family dinners; and amidst a thoroughfare of routs, balls, and drums, Mrs Horn Regular held her soirée. Mr Horn Regular, as well as his lady, had made exertions. A dragoon band was already stationed in the third room of the suite. Silk stockings had been distributed amongst the servants. The rooms had been watered with perfumes; and the whole house beautifully and superbly lighted up.

At a quarter past ten o'clock, the bringing in of several chairs containing single ladies, announced that company was arriving; and then the

sound of a carriage, suddenly arrested in its motion, gave important intimation of the coming bustle. But these were only preludes, and most disagreeable ones, to the crowd about to follow. Nothing being more awkward, even to well-bred people, than the full half-hour that sometimes elapses in large finely lighted rooms, in the company of a few persons not in any respect upon terms of ordinary familiarity, and now more than ever inclined to set forward their respective importance, under the softer aspect of diffidence and restraint.

At half-past ten, however, the knot of carriages had increased from two to twenty; and these again were fed, by the subsequent arrivals and departures of the parties. The line of chairs extended both ways as far as the adjoining streets. The bustle within the house increased in proportion. Several professionalists had exhibited to those who loved to attend routs under the mask of "musical parties;" and the military band had ushered in numerous fashionable groups with a few "favourite airs." A crowd of young persons had, however, contrived to club

together in the centre of the principal room; and, on a hint given by young Mr Horn Regular, who had that day worn his first pair of Wellingtons, a quadrille was formed, the entire of which was walked through in the true spirit of aristocratic indifference. The military band now struck up, and the parties promenaded. The spirit of Terpsichore, however, was still felt to flag. Experienced dancers had not yet involved themselves in the labyrinthical entanglements of twelve deep; ambitious beaus were not yet suing for introductions; and young ladies, the proper time not being come for display, appeared vexatiously backward. In short, the whole corps distinguée were in search of a lion, when from the Boudoir issued forth, in awful state, the Viscount and Viscountess Aloof; within the proper space, Miss Lætitia Alicia, and Mr Charles James Ferdinand Frederick; and after them, at regular distances, Mr and Mrs Henry, and Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle; Sir George Terrorfield and Charles Suttie; the two Misses Clerkington, Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, and Monsieur Diabolique; and, leaving Lady Ma-

ringle to pick up fans and flowers by the road, Sir Henry ushered into view the enormous person of——Lady Lumberfield !!!

Lady Lumberfield ! Lady Lumberfield, who lay days as well as nights sick in bed ! who had openly put her one foot in the grave ! and whose whole apartment displayed only the resources of an apothecary's shop ! at a rout !!!—Abroad, too, in wintry weather ; and abroad in full dress at half-past eleven at night !

Our readers must really forgive us the frolic of playing “ hunt the whistle ” with their senses ; it was not Lady Lumberfield, it was only somebody extremely like her. Lady Lumberfield had just had in reality a consultation of the Faculty, who had voted the decapitation and out-routing of a band of infirm stumps, commonly called rotten teeth. Her Ladyship, at any rate, seldom or never left home ; visited nowhere ; and, least of all, attended routs. Such, were the world never to be surprised with extraordinary events, should have been the actual state of the case ; and such, in the simplicity of our hearts, was our real conception of the matter, till, upon

a still more minute investigation, we beheld at Mrs Horn Regular's party, Lady Lumberfield herself. "Facts are stubborn things;" it *was* Lady Lumberfield.

Though we have been cautioned not to wonder at any thing when we see that bread and water can turn into blood and bone, yet there are certain events—especially if we are not thinking upon them—which not a little surprise and perplex those who have not the understanding to note, that invisible causes sometimes produce very visible effects. For instance, there are those persons of immense fortune, and of still more immense importance, who leave, when *all* is paid, only as much as carry them to their rest; and there are the merely well-doing, who sometimes rattle about the heads of their heirs goods and chattels to the tune of one, two, three, four, five, six, seven hundred thousand pounds! These surprises, however, are not more extraordinary than those which occur as to births, marriages, and deaths. Amongst the latter, how many tragedies have happened since a bed-ridden old man of eighty-five first announced to

surrounding spectators the speedy probability of his giving up the ghost ! How often are the strong, the powerful, and the healthy, struck down, even before they have outlived the sunny days of their prime ! How many languish, whose early strength had caused them to believe themselves invincible ! How many pine in helpless sickness, whose former vigour could withstand every weather, every shock ; yet whom a slight and trivial cold, caught by chance, have irrevocably crushed !—There are those, on the other hand, who, like summer flowers, which by imperceptible means now bloom again, are destined, at least for a little, to shine forth in all the splendour of unexpected recovery ; who display vigour at the close of a long reign of bad health ; who look young again after having nearly withered ; and who break away from colds, pains, stomach complaints, &c. &c. &c. just at the very moment when they were supposed to be no longer able to survive or resist their attacks. How many females are there who have returned once more to the visiting world, in all the proud activity of being again in per-

fect health ; while men, made well again, have put off and put on wigs, with all the delighted determination of henceforth enjoying the rest of their days “ out and out.”

Lady Lumberfield had just been the object of one of those lucky revolutions. On a sudden, and from no apparently external cause, she had been visited with a vast accession of health, strength, and good spirits. She had differed, too—not quarrelled, we must beg to state—with General Slopdish. Her cough had taken leave ; and she had exchanged slops, broths, and drugs, for exercise in the open air, and solids. Encouraged by so many favourable circumstances, she had quitted her bed, quitted her laboratory, quitted her Castle, and come to town to hold a consultation upon her teeth. An operation, nay several operations, had been performed ; the toothache had been displaced, and with it several other annoyances and causes of complaint. Elated still further by her success, and, in particular, by the active share she had taken in the capture of the reversion of the Bertie Castle estate, she had resolved upon taking her place

once more amongst the *haut ton*; and though she really could not endure the fatigue of late hours and evening parties, still she could not refuse to accompany her sister Aloof to the house of her very respectable countrywoman Mrs Horn Regular, to whom she had already sent, be it known, to apprize of her coming.

Where were Colonel Brown of Bertie and his new wife, that they were not here to witness the liberated Lumberfield lion, on its first making its own formidable appearance at Mrs Horn Regular's rout? Perhaps he lost not much by being absent. Lady Aloof's vinegar austerity kept every body at a distance. Purposely her Ladyship would promenade her party against the stream; and, purposely, her Ladyship would *cut* the whole circle of her own and her Lord's acquaintances. Purposely her Ladyship would turn away her head, with an air that said to the train behind, "Take no notice," on the approach of Madrake—who had dined with Mr Monotony, and was now escorting Miss Sophia Leslie—but whom she durst not directly assault. And purposely would her Ladyship, in like

pride, trample to death all the social and kindly feelings of civilized life, had not the career of her and her partisans been intercepted by the more august spectacle of the Countess Montgomery and the Lady Juliana, elegantly attired, and shining, not so much in the diamond splendour of ancestry, as in the more radiant pleasure of looking pleased, and of trying themselves to please.

This benign sight caused Lady Aloof and her train of stand-offs to retraverse. In returning to the large room they were hustled by persons taking up their vis-à-vis for one of those decidedly dancing quadrilles which extend from one end of a ball-room to the other. The presence of Lady Juliana Montgomery had offended the Aloof family without softening their pride; while Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw talked openly of going over to the enemy, and likewise of carrying along with her Monsieur le Comte Diabolique. In a word, the immaculate Aloofs were beginning to suspect that they had committed a *fault*; when Mrs Horn Regular, intent upon

their comfort, came to put what was wrong to rights.

Two card-tables were taken up. The one was handed over for the benefit of the mob ; the other was invaded by the bachelor, or, more properly speaking, widower Earl of ———, Lady Lumberfield, and Lord and Lady Aloof. The train were entreated to form a quadrille in the second room ; and Miss Methodical, Miss Horn Regular, and Miss Hyndford's two cousins were produced, with permission, for the purpose of extending, and by consequence accommodating the set.

“ You will dance, I suppose ? ” said Madrake to his companions, as they hovered about the outskirts of the larger party.

“ No,” answered Miss Leslie. “ I think, in *your* company, Mr Madrake, I should prefer to talk.”

“ Most of these people dance merely that they may talk when the dance is done,” observed her Cicisbeo.

“ If you *wish* me to dance, Mr Madrake ”—

“ By no means : I am not so fond of making

a journey through a crowd, like the heads—nor am I so anxious to be confined in, head upwards, in a square of three-and-a-half feet, like the flanks:—that other set would not have us. But let us look on; the minds of men are sometimes made up in their dancing.—

“ You will observe, in the first place,” continued Madrake, “ that the most genteel always walk through such parts as the *Chaine-Anglais*, and *Chaine de Dame*; the more particular walk away.—You see it has happened as I tell you. In the mean time, we shall take a survey of the beaux, beginning with that awkward little boy Adam Horn Regular. There are three of these Regulars; Adam, Samuel, and Isaac—wild Isaac. The first will be a bachelor; Samuel will be a regular fox-hunter; and wild Isaac will be a lawyer—and a most inveterate one. These scriptural designations have passed from generation to generation, and have gallantly kept pace with the James’s, John’s, and Thomas’s, of the less sacred militia of the Methodicals.”

“ The next dance is *L'Eté*; for indolence in dancing, like indolence in every thing else, has reduced the alphabet of fashionable dancing, in this our modern Athens, to that single letter, number one; the first set having also proved the last.

“ This figure, and it is by far the most simple and graceful, will point out to you more decidedly than any other, all those partners of the ladies on the other side of thirty. These men, as you may now observe, have got their dancing in ‘ the old school ;’ and which, though somewhat broke upon by the waltz step, a visit to the continent, and the discipline of ‘ a private class for grown gentlemen,’ (which, by the bye, did much to raise the dignity of dancing-masters and their art), retains nevertheless much of the ancient animal zest of cutting, jumping, and hop one, two, and three; and, in some cases should the music happen to play a little quick, the Scotchman will let fly—though not by any means on purpose—one of his old savage reel-steps, one of those *flings*, which made mothers

anciently suppose dancing to be good for the health.

“ Opposed to them—if you will look a little this way—we have a brace of *propre* dandies, just fresh from the hands of D——, to whom their own private love of flourish has for a long time so constantly led them. These scions of ‘the young idea’ form great part of the amusement of the dancers themselves, as well as of the spectators at large.—The *figuranti*, however, obtain but a very dubious sort of applause. Most people are shy of a talent which betrays so much of the frivolousness of the possessor; while others smile, not so much in admiration, as in that mixed feeling, half pleasure half derision, with which the *canaille* generally contemplate the gambols of a dancing girl on a raree stage. The best dancers are certainly those who, having early received a quadrille education, are too gentlemanly in their dispositions to retain any thing more of it than the manner; a manner which manifests itself chiefly in the general propriety, good taste, and decorum of the character; a manner which—if you will turn this way—applies to mostly all

the individuals of the smaller quadrille; and to none more—though I am loth to confess it—than to black, little, ugly, active Monsieur Diabolique.”

“Monsieur Diabolique!” said Miss Leslie in some surprise; “and is that he? How in the world came such a nicknackity looking creature to get so much into the mouths, and so much into the graces of the *haut-ton*, such as it is with us?”

“Merely because—and the reason is very simple—Monsieur Diabolique is foreign, and Monsieur Diabolique is the fashion.”

“But why the fashion, Mr Madrake?”

“Because, *encore*, he is fashionable.”

“But we have fashionable men of the very highest rank; and yet *they* never excited the sensation, the applause, which seems to accompany the fortunes of this same Monsieur Diabolique.”

“My dear Miss Leslie,” gently returned Madrake, “you forget that there is no such wonders as those which come forth of our own wild imaginations. Monsieur Diabolique is *believed*

to be an angel of talent, taste, wit, and politeness ; nay more, Monsieur Diabolique is *thought* to possess fame, fortune, and influence. That he is heir to a Countship is not so extraordinary as that he should be *recherché* even amongst the most distinguished—the *élite* of the *élite*—the elect of the elected. Whether or not, however, these honours be genuine, Monsieur Diabolique's own conduct does much to carry him through ; and as there is nobody here to 'take him down,' he may still reign to the satisfaction of certain circles, so long as, for the sake of superiority, he condescends to reside amongst them.—But come, let us return to the larger group, in order that I may have for my lecture on female dancing a still larger sample of examples. My dear Miss Leslie, never be *too* graceful in dancing. Of all showing off, that is the least successful, and the most mistaken.

“ Observe you, *par exemple*, that little creature ‘*soloing* it’ in front of that grand hussar, her head-gear piled up like the steeple-crowned turban of some false dwarf in a melo-drame. Does she expect, by sidleing and bridling, to

manage the *heart* of her soldier lad? Luckily she has some companions in folly, otherwise he might be apt to suspect her to be either tipsy or mad: she has them—if you'll take notice—in these two squat sailing dolls, with their tiny hands pinned to their puckered frocks, a-begging for a little praise; perhaps a-begging for a little beau. Let no gentlewoman ape the dancing school practice of spreading out her frock.

“ Much do we hear about the female character being best appreciated in the quiet solitude of domestic life. I dissent entirely from this opinion; and would, *pour prendre l'occasion aux cheveux*, rather judge of her in the midst of a ball. A woman can shadow her feelings and propensities in the calm of retirement; the disguise is discovered in the blaze of flattery and excitement. Music and dancing form a sort of varnish, which draws forth the hidden colours of the disposition, and detects the expanded traits of exultation and impatience; in a word, distinguishes the true features from the false. Around us, for instance, we may perceive a crowd of girls, in whom pride,

folly, affectation, and even worse feelings, are but too conspicuous; and yet these are the very persons whose almost saint-like propriety of demeanour has, in a sober morning, filled us with the highest ideas of their excellence. You see before you at this very moment,” continued Madrake, “ a lady—though not now a young lady—who has been long very much celebrated for the classic elegance of her dancing. She caught the quadrille manner just the very year before she came out, and has since despised to recollect any other kind of dance, except the waltz, which she has long had perfect in all its parts. You would not remark it, perhaps, but I observed that she was even below mediocre at the first, so indifferently did she perform her part. I will give you the reason: she is now a *devotee*. Her dancing caught *eyes* instead of *hearts*. The certain age came still further to blight her vegetable face; and the *Mauvaisehonte*, whom every body else avoided frequently, *too* frequently perhaps, became the sole admirer of her art. It was time, therefore, to follow fame, since fame had fled, and to feed that domineer-

ing love of consequence amongst the poor, since she had failed to inveigle the rich. Like Miss Hyndford, however, she still loves, when properly supported, to maintain her ground, even amongst the ungodly and the heathen; and is also tempted, as you may observe, to resume for a time her former empire in the dance. Nothing can equal, I should think, the *opiniâtreté* and self-applause contained within the circuit of that confident looking head and shoulders.—Come this way,” and they veered round to another quarter of the circle.

“The dance is about to finish,” resumed Madrake; “and the second figure is repeated in the finale. Hitherto I have done nothing but criticise, nothing but find fault.—*There*,” and his large eyes fixed themselves upon a young lady, who had so little of the *outré* about her, that she would, but for her extreme loveliness, have hardly attracted his companion’s notice. “You will acknowledge, my dear Miss Leslie, that whatever may have been my mistakes, I am now correct. That person, so acceptable from her simplicity, her lady-like gentleness,

and her unaffected and undeviating decorum, is the Lady Juliana Montgomery. She needed not the assistance, you will think, of those lustre-shining ornaments; but diffident, perhaps, of appearing, like many others, to trust *entirely* to her charms, she disdains not to solicit, upon occasion, the foreign aid of ornament. If in music we can trace combinations of harmony, which sometimes assist to deify the qualifications of the person we love, I should now say of the Lady Juliana, as in the inspired language of *Delphine*, ‘In painting, I retrace thy image; in music, thy voice; and in heaven, thy look!’”

“Mr Madrake,” said Miss Leslie, smiling, “who would not be selfish? You would sacrifice the rest of the world for the pleasure of admiring the Lady Juliana and her accomplishments.—I tremble for myself.”

“Then you need not,” he returned, with an earnestness of manner which she had never observed in him before—“for should I ever have enough of prosperity to entitle me to aspire to such a hand as Lady Juliana Montgomery’s, I would seek only—to marry you.”

“ To marry me, Mr Madrake !!! But, for mercy’s sake, talk lower—I fear, now since the music has stopped, that we may be overheard.”

“ Yes, Miss Leslie, I should wish to marry you. But do not look so *very* much terrified. Recollect, I have not yet come to my prosperity, and you can scarcely boast of yours.”

“ And therefore must not boast of having awakened any permanent feelings of affection, I suppose? I did not know that you were so mercenary, Mr Madrake.”

“ A proof, perhaps, that you do not know me. There are few who do. I should wish in marrying, to acquire also the power of living with dignity; of being kind, charitable, hospitable—of doing good. I am none of those—nor do I profess that I am—who can afford to please themselves; and I should not wish to make any one the companion of my discontent. I swear to you, however, that were I a prince, my ambition, such as it is, would lead me to your feet. As matters stand, I can subsist as I am. Farewell for a little; do not resent this confidence, for should we quarrel—we should

very soon make it up again." And he relinquished her into the hands of a young gentleman, who now came to request her to dance.

"Who is that large enormous-looking woman at cards with the Aloofs and my Lord Liberality?"—(for so the widower Earl of ——— was, by less worthy personages, denominated),—said Lady Methodical—who made it a rule never to play cards after eleven—to one of the Messrs Regular, W. S. who made it a *point* never to play cards before it. "Surely I have seen somebody that resembled her before, Mr Regular."

"It is 'the dead alive,' Lady Methodical. Or, had Colonel Brown been here, 'the knowing ones taken in.'"

"She is a very clumsy woman, certainly," returned Lady Methodical, who wished to throw cold water upon every thing that could lead to the story of her governess, Mademoiselle Antoinette's having been 'taken off.'

"She is the double of Lady Lumberfield, I suspect."

"O, not nearly so large, surely, as Lady Lumberfield?"

“ Perhaps, then, she may be only Lady Lumberfield’s double.”

“ Well, you lawyers actually invent answers that you may afterwards pun upon them. But what could have put Lady Lumberfield into your head ?”

“ Rather ask, what could have put such a heavy person as Lady Lumberfield into that chair.”

“ *Is it Lady Lumberfield ?*”

“ If it is not, it is, perhaps, all that’s for her. I was on the stairs when the whole party were announced. The man made a very comfortable mistake, for he called the first of the lot a *luif*, and the last of them a *lum*.”

“ Only think !” quietly exclaimed Lady Methodical, who had looked not listened, and fixing her chastened eyes upon the distant *corpus* of Lady Lumberfield. And she turned again to look after Miss Methodical, whom she wished to inform that it was now a quarter past twelve, and that the carriage must by this time have arrived.

Miss Methodical, however, had made her

escape. She was under the arm of one of those handsome Captains of Dragoon-Guards, who were in the habit of embellishing the parties of the modern Caledonians during the spring of 182—, and whom she had compelled also to hide behind the ranks of his fellow-soldiers—in music, under the pretence of listening to one particular note of one particular flageolet, but in reality to elude the search of her father and mother, who she knew would not wait, and who would rather leave her at any time to her fate, than stay up, or stay out, five minutes beyond the given time. Sir James and Lady Methodical must, therefore, go away by themselves. The company, however, on looking round, seemed extremely select; and they could not suspect that their dear daughter, (who had so lately suffered so much from the stratagems of war in the manœuvres of white-headed Colonel Brown), would have been so easily persuaded to listen to the more fascinating flatteries of the handsome dark-whiskered Captain Black.

There again, however, they were mistaken. “What,” says the barber in the Devil’s Elixir,

“are the numberless varieties of whiskers, in their elegant windings and curvatures! now softly bending around the cheek in the fashion of the delicate oval—now melancholily sinking straight down into the depth of the neck—now boldly mounting up even to the corner of the mouth—anon narrowing modestly into small delicate lines—anon spreading out in full unchastised luxuriance!——What, I say, are all these, but the inventions of our science, in which the high striving after the sublime, the beautiful, the *ideal*, is unfolded!”—Miss Methodical did not require any body to inform her, that in the gold and scarlet dress of handsome Captain Black, the sublime, the beautiful, the *ideal*, was unfolded. And what thought Captain Black of Miss Methodical?—He thought her a Horror. Can our readers comprehend and appreciate the full meaning of that sometimes made use of term, a horror? Can they understand a horror in *all* its bearings?

But Captain Black was kind, attentive, gallant, and polite. Military men have always something delightful to say to the ladies. Whe-

ther it belongs more particularly to their imposing dress, their noble profession, or their breeding, still what they do say carries a charm even in its mere simple sound. Perhaps it is, that their discipline teaches them simplicity; at all events, it is generally neither so intricate, nor so far-fetched, as the badinage of the plain-clothed lords, however much these worthies may abound in wit. It is not, we take it, because the men can shew off themselves in talk, but that they can also shew off *them*, that the ladies sometimes give the preference to the least preferable—at least so far as intellect is concerned—of the lot.

We do not mean, however, to make the question an argument. Captain Black's discourse to Miss Methodical was all upon *sincerity*. Miss Methodical's, that she could never endure a military man or a red coat.

The company, with the exception of the card-players, and five dispersed sofas, had in the mean time paired off—in imitation of Miss Methodical and Captain Black, we presume. Mr Madrake was again with Miss Leslie; Mrs

Horn Regular, by permission, had re-introduced the Honourable Mr Aloof to Lady Juliana; Miss Hyndford was with her cousin; Miss Aloof was with Monsieur Diabolique. In this order they had just danced, when their promenade prattle was interrupted, and themselves laid fast, by the honour of a song from Mr Squeake—at best a *groan*, and a double one—when they were all informed that Mr Squeake intended to favour them with one of his *own composing*.

CHAPTER IV.

“ These are the workings of the Devil.”

EVERY body consented to be victims to this overpowering advertisement but Miss Aloof, and her dexterous adviser Monsieur Diabolique. This pair pressed back as the crowd pressed forward ; and, disentangling themselves from even the more distant congregating groups, set themselves to prowling around, in all the ferociousness of persons who have the audacity, as well as the authority, to ridicule and to find fault.

In this polite expedition, Mrs Horn Regular, her house, husband, family, and friends, had the honour to be most scientifically, as well as most liberally, ‘ cut up.’ Even the ornaments of the different rooms were now looked to, and as industriously laughed at.

A flower piece, in an extraordinarily fine frame, placed above the door leading into the ante-room, and well known to have been the handywork, before her marriage, of Mrs Horn Regular herself, at last attracted the greater share of attention.

Monsieur Diabolique, who, though not a native, prided himself, as our readers must have observed, upon his clear orthoepy of the English, descanted largely upon its faults; taking time to the dissection in his attempts at being correct. He was answered by Miss Aloof—who had just approved of a glass of lemonade—from time to time, and who also desired, in return, to be thought to talk excellent French. In the meantime, the parties fancied that they were overheard by two of the young Horn Regulars, and their eloquence became absolutely inspired. Monsieur Diabolique, in a frolic, would hang Miss Aloof's artificial wreath upon one of the ornaments of the picture frame, in order to shew to the company more distinctly for what the drawing was intended. Miss Aloof, however, refused to part with her flowers, though in a way

that seemed to imply consent; and Monsieur Diabolique got upon a chair, that he might the more readily effect the intended transfer.

He was standing on this slippery-cushioned pedestal, slightly holding by the tip of the young lady's glove, when a violent rattle, which he took for the final descent of the picture upon the top of his own head, caused Monsieur Diabolique suddenly to somerset and recoil, when, reeling confusedly against what appeared to be the extended drapery of a large hanging window curtain, Monsieur Diabolique disappeared.

A number of gentlemen, who had ungloved, were applauding the shewy performance of Mr Squeake; the rest of the company were beginning to move about, and disperse.

Miss Aloof resumed that bleak black look of supercilious disgust, which the kindred sympathies of Monsieur Diabolique had alone been able to dismiss; and looked, or rather watched, to see under which portion of the sombre festoons Mr Diabolique would reappear: But in vain; Monsieur Diabolique had finally and irrevocably dissolved. Miss Aloof put her hand

instinctively to her head, to ascertain whether so unaccountable a person might not have carried off her garland wreath without being conscious of the theft, and then suffered herself to be picked up by Miss Hyndford, Sir George Terrorfield, and some other members of the suite.

Miss Aloof once more looked back upon the descending curtains, but their "solemn confusion" remained still unbroken, still undisturbed.

"I feel giddy with the heat—fetch mamma;" and Miss Aloof appeared very willing to excite an apprehension amongst the bystanders that she should faint.

"Had she not better be taken to her carriage?" exclaimed Miss Hyndford, who, upon a little more experience, was rather inclined to become Lady Terrorfield than Madame Diabolique. And she repeated her opinion, in order that she might get Miss Aloof—who had likewise a predilection for the Terrorfield dynasty—taken out of the way.

"O no; I shall just take your arm for a little, Sir George," cried Miss Aloof, reviving some-

what cleverly at the idea of being so speedily disposed of. "I feel better ; and Mamma cannot be very far off."

"The best way *trouver à chaque trou une cheville*, I suspect," returned Sir George, who took every thing with a sort of inveterate sang froid. And he hummed the air of "*Voulez vous danser, Mademoiselle.*"

"Très-bien, je suis le vôtre," quickly returned Miss Aloof; who saw that it was necessary to be alive to be able to cut out Miss Hyndford.

"Say you're engaged," cried a voice, which she did not recognize as Monsieur Diabolique's.

"You *are* engaged," repeated the voice.

Miss Aloof blamed Charles Suttie, who had his back towards them; Sir George Terrorfield blamed Miss Hyndford.

"By the fatal wreath I *swear* you are engaged!"

"Oh, heavens! Sir George, it is Monsieur Diabolique."

"And where then, pray, is this Monsieur Diabolique?"

"O, pray, Sir George, attend to your vis-à-

vis,” for the parties had stood up to dance. “I declare it is Miss Hyndford : How she does fag out that poor cousin of hers!—Now, Sir George, balancez.”

“He shall find his death at the point of my pistol bullet!” exclaimed Sir George, running into the quadrille instead of tour des mains into his place : “he has been too long in Scot”——

“Sir George! Sir George! Sir George!” cried Miss Aloof.

“Sir George! Sir George! Sir George!” screamed Miss Hyndford.

“Sir George! Sir George! Sir George!” squeaked Miss Methodical; “who ever before saw any body put about a dance?”

“I will put you all to *death*,” said Sir George in an under voice, and making a shift to get back to his place. “Miss Aloof, though I appear calm, I *insist* upon the destruction of Monsieur Diabolique : You *see* how very much afraid he is to shew himself.”

Miss Aloof looked back again upon the sombre falling curtains, and saw behind them something very like an illumination of lights.

Miss Aloof, you don't attend to your duty—
You don't attend to your duty, Miss Aloof."

"O, Sir George, I feel *so* fatigued."

"But can't you hold on?—You see that every body has been requested to dance, and that the card-tables have broke up."

"C'est impossible, Sir George—c'est impossible."

"Pourquoi, pourquoi, pourquoi?" cried Sir George, quitting her for a moment to attend to the dance.

"For a very simple reason, Sir George."

"Pour avoir fait un balancé avec ce parvenu?"

"No, Sir George; it is because I believe that Monsieur Diabolique has set fire to the house."

"Then slip behind Lady Lumberfield, and I will take care of you, Miss Aloof."

Miss Aloof left the quadrille—left it because she had been told that she was dancing in a mixed set, and in company with a nouveau riche. Miss Aloof left, because she should by so doing embarrass and "put out" Miss Hynd-

ford, who was dancing the remainder of the figures with Mr Horn Regular, the master of the house himself.

The piteous entreaties of her vis-à-vis to remain, made Miss Aloof exert herself still faster to hasten away, even while her dull eyes were yet turned upon the impervious glimmer of Monsieur Diabolique's infernal lights.

"We will supply their place, Sir," said Lady Juliana, who was standing beside her partner, the Honourable Charles James Aloof.

The Honourable Charles James Aloof, though very willing to oblige Lady Juliana Montgomery, demurred.

"Our double duty, if severe, will not be very long, Mr Aloof," again essayed Lady Juliana, who saw that Mr Horn Regular was particularly anxious to keep the members of the quadrille together, from a fear lest, as the rooms were getting hot, several others of the party might likewise desert.

"If Mr Aloof will condescend to change places with me?" said Madrake, who felt also anxious to remedy the defect.

Mr Aloof looked not at Madrake, but at his friend, Miss Leslie. He had never heard his mother, or indeed any of the family, make mention of that young lady ; and he prudently shrunk from the idea of hazarding the family consequence, merely to perform a simple act of generosity.

“ Sir George Terrorfield, you will fill up a place ?” interposed Mr Horn Regular, who hated to have his arrangements disturbed, almost as much as either Lady Methodical or his wife.

“ You must not think of leaving *me*, Sir George,” cried Miss Aloof, casting a wasp’s eye upon the whole group ; and she dared, with an equally good intentioned frown, the whole set of Maringles to assist.

“ Not I ;”—and Sir George, in obéissance, threw himself back in his settee in a yawn.

The first bars of the music had now been played, but luckily the parties in dispute formed a side.

Lady Juliana cast a slight look of contempt upon both Sir George Terrorfield and Miss

Aloof, and quitted her own partner and her own place to occupy theirs; without considering who, or who not, should take it upon him to be her assistant.

Sir George Terrorfield half rose from his seat. He was not a marrying man; but he would do any thing to possess such a woman as Lady Juliana, or the fortune she should inherit, or rather, already inherited. A second entreaty from Miss Aloof to sit still, but more particularly Lady Juliana's cold indignant look, intercepted him; and he sat down again, as if in obedience to Miss Aloof's command.

"How amiable that is of Lady Juliana!" exclaimed Miss Leslie, addressing Madrake, who was too much engaged at the moment in observing her, to think of intermeddling in the feud. "Perhaps she will accept of *you* for a companion. I shall stand back and look on, and things may be made a little square after all: What do you think, Mr Madrake?"

"Any other person in the world but yourself would have increased the difficulty," returned Madrake, hastily. "Now I know that I have

got a friend." And he crossed over to the Lady Juliana's side, just in time to anticipate the Honourable Mr Charles James, who was beginning to find himself a little at a *non plus*, and whose mortification was rendered the more perfectly complete from observing how well his rival was received, and how little Mrs Augustus Maringle (Mrs Henry for many weighty reasons did not dance) cared, when her own convenience was placed in the scale, to come to his assistance.

"Well, Mr Madrake, this is so kind of you"——

"Dear Lady Juliana, don't mention it.—I have observed you, Lady Juliana," continued Madrake, talking in a low impressive voice, and retiring a little from the crowd—"I have observed you with an attention that originated solely in my admiration and respect. I have contemplated the graces of your person; the dignified decorum of your manners; your good taste; and your constant desire and inclination to favour and oblige. You are the good being whom I *first* met; whom I saw still more beautifully developed at Champ Fleury; and whom

I must admire and esteem, to my own honour, more than any body else.—It is now *your* time, I believe, to dance.”

Lady Juliana would have paused, so soon as her part in the dance had been enacted, to consider these remarkable words, and the tone of deep interest with which, notwithstanding the easy gaiety of his concluding address, they had been pronounced; when, just as the music ceased, her attention was roused by seeing the whole drapery of the window-curtain, which had so long and so effectually, be it remembered, extinguished Monsieur Diabolique, slowly and magnificently drawn up, disclosing, to the view of the astonished guests, a banquet flowing and glittering as the supper of some Sultana of the Arabian Nights.

The idea had been stolen from Miss Nonsuch, who could manage a surprise as well as every thing else, and improved by Mr Horn Regular, who had taken the more pains, since he seldom or never, like Lady Methodical, quitted the regular road.

A third part of the second drawing-room,

which was a very long one, had been cut off and subtracted, by bringing forward, with some little additions, the extended curtains and festoons of the large Venetian window ; and with a skill and nicety which nobody but that ill-favoured abortion, Monsieur Diabolique, could penetrate or detect. It now contained a festive, or rather a fairy board, which sparkled with temples of spun sugar, crystal goblets containing gold and silver fish—some dead ones Monsieur Diabolique discovered to be painted green—pyramids of fancy paste, and exotic plants and flowers in splendid and beautiful luxuriance. In the centre, and within the embrasure of the real window itself, were seated Mr Squeake and other two vocalists, attired in sumptuous fancy dresses ; behind them, and also stowed away in the different corners, were the obliging members of the military band ; and round and round were rows of seats proportionally raised for the accommodation of the ladies. This board likewise contained, though partly hidden among the profusion of fruits, flowers, and stuffed birds, a numberless quantity of small clear

French bottles, sheltering and preserving certain sparkling beverages, which, however, it was intended the ladies should taste in a mistake; while back in the room was produced, as if by magic, a set of covered sofa, loo, and Pembroke tables, filled with vessels of a less equivocal colour; and containing a liquid, which, whether it were dark, pink, or white, contained an essence which was nevertheless to make the men laud to the skies the excellent taste of Mrs Horn Regular's *regale*, or, as Monsieur Diabolique more happily defined it, "The Regulars' regular go."

Lady Aloof was the first person who was requested to take her seat at this exhibition: Lady Lumberfield was the next—her Ladyship got through the spaces left for the benefit of ingress and egress *as well as could be expected*: The Countess of Montgomery being, though the *premier*, at all times the most obliging, was the third. The widower Earl of —, or as he is sometimes denominated Lord Liberality, was the fourth. The suite took their places without being asked; and all sorts of lords and ladies

followed *en train*. Lord Liberality, as the crowd of ladies approached, retired to the settlements behind; the rest of the gentlemen followed his example. The Viscount Aloof and the Honourable Charles James sat still; or, as they said, “they could’nt”—read, would’nt—“get out;” for it was one of their grand and principal maxims, that an Aloof should always keep away from a crowd. Lady Juliana took her place with that mild and gentle dignity which so much distinguished her: Madrake placed Miss Leslie by her side.

At half-past one in the morning the company had banquetted; Mr Squeake and his companions had glee’d; and the military band had played. At half-past one in the morning the company were relieved of the vinegar presence of Lord and Lady Aloof, Lady Lumberfield, and suite.

“The gods march off—the mortal rabble
Are left to kick, and cuff, and squabble.”

They were also purified from the presence of that impudent piece of malice Monsieur Diabo-

lique, who having ascertained in perspective what was to be transacted behind the curtain, so soon as he had regained his feet had very opportunely sprung from beneath the centre pyramid into a centre seat, between the now beauless figures of Miss Hyndford and Miss Aloof.—At half-past one in the morning, the carpet of the principal room, in which the company were not, was taken up, and the ball commenced in earnest.

The ball not only commenced, but commenced with spirit. Ladies were refreshed, not fatigued. Beaus were fresh, in every sense of the word. Mammas smiled with pleasure; dames of a certain age were now certain of being solicited to dance; young persons seemed for the first time to laugh and skip about with glee. Those grave ridiculous instances of vanity, who go about to parties and never dance, and who are sometimes tempted to shew that they do not love even consequence better than themselves, were now happy to trip it gaily with their neighbours; and married men, for many years starched up, now broke away, like Charles the Second's courtiers, in a fit of wild frolic.

The ball opened with a contre-dance. Mrs Horn Regular herself, at the instance of brow-beating Sir George Terrorfield—who had escorted home Miss Aloof—condescended to lead off; and the august pair danced down three couples. Quadrilles followed. The lancers and other figures were adventured; and then the parties would waltz. The contagion spread. Miss Methodical, the most correct young person of the age, would keep her chair and footman waiting two and a half hours merely for the love of waltz. But why quote her? every body waltzed.

In spite, however, of all this success, we cannot help looking upon a ball, after supper, in something of the same light as Monsieur Diabolique chose to view Miss Hyndford's curls; for it is pretty certain, that all that's bright *can* fade.

To begin—the Countess of Montgomery and her accomplished daughter went away in the middle of the country or contre-dance; but without the ostentation of happing, or the less amiable determination of carrying off the prin-

cipal men of the company. Then followed Miss Leslie—who sorrowed for the anxieties of Mrs Fife—accompanied by her champion Mr Madrake; and, after them, all the stars, or those who, upon any pretence, had approved themselves the stars, of the night.

In half an hour the ball had thinned down to a wonderful extent; and the *dame de maison* had already caused the folding-doors of the second grand room to be shut. Evil-disposed persons have asserted, that this was done in order to prevent the possibility of a re-action amongst the eatables, or more likely the drinkables; but we ourselves rather guess, that it was merely in order to concentrate the company for the sake of appearances; especially as the men had still their negus in the dining parlour below. At length and by degrees the whole assembly melted off, with the exception of a set of uproarious wretches; at the head of whom may be mentioned Sir George Terrorfield and Charles Suttie, who had just seated themselves in front of a dozen or two of undecanted Margaux. They had supposed them-

selves out of the way, and had got hold of some of the young Horn Regulars, before whom they were now bumpering it strong, under the drunken pretence of drinking to the health of their much respected friend, Mrs Horn Regular; each in turn craving the honour of toasting the host—Mr Adam Horn Regular, younger, the heir-apparent—the prosperity of the house—the Regular family in all its branches—confusion to regular bores, spoons, &c. &c.;—all to be replied to without daylight.

“What a noise these men are making down stairs, Mr Regular!” said the lady, seating herself before a card-table merely to take rest. “One would suppose that when young men carry their hats in their hands, they could find no particular difficulty in putting them on their heads.”

“Why, you know, Ma’am, whenever Terrorfield comes to dance, he comes to drink.”

“Unfortunate! But cannot he drink without making a speech? I believe I hear his voice.”

“ Why, Ma’am, you mistake; that voice belongs to Mr ——, nicknamed Prose.”

“ You will get them away, then, as soon as possible, Mr Regular,” returned Mrs Regular with a yawn. “ Our servants are not accustomed with this work.” Having said, Mrs Regular rose, and summoning her maid, passed on, or rather passed up, to her own spacious apartment.

Her door had no sooner closed, than Mr Regular rung violently.

The crew below paused; and knowing something of the gentleman’s reputation for order, began to suspect themselves somewhat at fault.

Mr Horn Regular’s bell rang a second peal before the first could be answered.

Some of the more timorous drinkers ventured to undo the door, which by some accident or other had got bolted, and also to take a peep into the lobby, now thronged with the half-demolished *materiel* of the deserted banquet.

“ Put out all the lights, and desire the men to go to bed !” vociferated Mr Horn Regular from the top of the landing-place.—“ Have you

counted all your wine, Mr Haddohold?" he added in a quieter voice. "I suppose, with the exception of the club below, there has been nothing drunk.—Stop, I think I hear them going off—with curses, too, at being so shabbily turned out. Confound their impudence!"

"There's an ould proverb, Maister Reglar, —What can ye expect from a soo but a grumph?"

"Your countrymen must be all swine, then, Mr Haddohold; for they are *always* grumphing.—From what original, I wonder, came the Aberdonians?—But I see, Mr Haddohold, that you are half asleep—any thing rather than a direct reply to a simple question."

And Mr Horn Regular, or, as his ejected guests now politely entitled him, the Regular Horn Spoon, not a little overcome with fatigue himself, forthwith withdrew, in order to obtain his own small share of rest.

CHAPTER V.

“ But what in oddness can be more sublime
Than S——, the foremost toymen of his time :
His nice ambition lies in curious fancies,
His daughter’s portion a rich shell enhances ;
And Ashmole’s baby-house is, in his view,
Britannia’s golden mine, a rich Peru !
How his eyes languish ! how his thoughts adore
That painted vest, which Joseph never wore !
He shews on holidays a sacred pin,
That touch’d the ruff that touch’d Queen Bess’s chin.”

YOUNG.

THE following opinions were circulated by ear witnesses respecting Mrs Horn Regular’s musical party, ball, and rout.

Lady Aloof—who had caught cold—described it as “ a shocking business.”

Miss Aloof—had been *rather* amused.

Lord Aloof—thought things had got on pretty well.

The Honourable Charles James—had been tired to death.

Monsieur Diabolique—thought the let-off rather shewy.

Miss Hyndford—could not exactly make up her mind upon the occasion; there was so very much both *pour et contre*.

Miss Methodical—who had staid to see the handsome Captain Black offer his compliments and sincerity to somebody else—thought the whole affair execrable. Miss Methodical, also, complained to some friends that she had been persecuted the whole night by a horror of a man, whom somebody had called Black.

Sir James and Lady Methodical—professed, with some truth, to have seen nothing extraordinary.

Sir George Terrorfield and his party—acknowledged to have fared worse.

Lady Lumberfield, and the rest of the suite—that the rooms got rather hot, but that every thing seemed very nice.

Lady Montgomery and her daughter—had felt themselves very much gratified indeed.

Item of Miss Leslie.

Item of my Lord Liberality.

Colonel Aikenside—whose own papa was once, no matter what—was very much pleased to have met, in so large a party, so many persons of *decent* rank.

The Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger, who had been totally overlooked, and had not once danced—had never spent such an agreeable night. They went further, and announced separately to their numerous companions, the many persons of distinction whom they had contradicted and abused, and the immense number of pretty girls with whom they had flirted and danced.

The Horn Regulars themselves—found only fault with the Aloof party for keeping themselves so very distinct.

Madrake—thought, with the fable of the frogs, “That what was death to the entertainer, was generally sport to the entertained.”

The greater number of the guests—exaggerated every thing beyond almost the possibility of belief.

These exaggerations, which generally took their rise in the love of consequence and eclat of the parties whose interest it was to be identified with all such glorious achievements, grew, like the wave of a lake when disturbed by a pebble, still more large and extended ; and, like it, they grew insensibly weaker, till at last they were superseded by others, it might be, of a still more wonderful and incomprehensible cast.

The Horn Regular assembly had been held on a Monday. On the following Saturday, people who had been there were asking one another, whether they remembered the night on which it had taken place ?

From that gala, and from other six of similar dignity, Madrake adjourned to spend a morning with Mr Monotony.

“ Come again, Madrake, I see !” exclaimed that gentleman, as the former paid his devoirs. “ Wonders, I suppose, will never cease. You are, I suspect, over more than head and ears in visits, and yet you are come once more to my tabernacle, in order to yawn and gape yourself asleep.”

Madrake nodded, and seemed inclined to relapse into the mentioned rest.

This disposition made Mr Monotony restless.—

“ You are here, I perceive, Madrake, to take quiet, as ingenious people take bitters—for a relish.”

“ To take schnaps, Mr Monotony, as well as naps.”

“ O, ho ! to dine here, I perceive. Well, Madrake, as somebody said of Voltaire, amongst all clever devils, you are the cleverest.”

“ Cleverness, Mr Monotony ! What is cleverness ? Who was clever ? He who took the measure at five eye-lengths, and then, jumping thirty yards, tumbled into the ditch ?—I came here, according to my judgment, to pass the hours in peace, and I find I have only fallen into a quick-sand of gnats.”

“ To counteract the comforts of which, you have brought still more troublesome verses from the Devil’s Elixir.”

“ The Devil’s Elixir, Mr Monotony ! never believe in that book.”

“ Authors are jealous, it is said. Pray, when do you publish ?”

“ Very soon. I wish, however, in the mean time, to pick up a few more facts. It is the taste of the day to swallow nothing but what is founded on truth. You are to have a place in my book, Mr Monotony.”

“ Me !!! Why me, more than any of the rest of your acquaintance, Madrake ?”

“ Pardon, Signior Montoni, I have already *set down* the most of my acquaintance.”

“ But I shall prosecute you upon your own confession.”

“ Then you will do me a very particular piece of service.”

“ A service, Mr Madrake !”

“ Yes, Mr Monotony, a service. Nobody ever becomes celebrated till it has been first tried to have them extinguished ; upon which the flame of reputation immediately rises, and, very probably, singes all around.”

“ Mr Madrake, I begin to repent not having let you alone. Will it add any thing to your knowledge to go and see the panorama ?”

“ Perhaps it may—more likely it may not.”

“ Well, then, I think I hear my carriage.”

Mr Monotony’s panorama was a tour through the streets.

The horses had scarcely turned the corner of the University in coming from the south, when Madrake drew down all the blinds.

“ My dear Mr Monotony, such a racket must distract you.”

“ O, not in the least. You know I am accustomed to take things easy. Pray, allow me to run up the blinds on my side.”

“ If you can take things easy, Mr Monotony, you must know that I can *not*. Allow your blind, like the rest, to remain as it is.”

“ Well, Madrake, I begin to find that we have often as much reason to repent of having one friend as of having many. Who would have thought that, like the man in the fable, I had quitted my solitude to nourish a viper !”

“ ‘ The best opportunities are sometimes lost,’ says an historian, ‘ because it is not supposed that an enemy could be so ill advised as to furnish them :’—when I talked of making you

shine in a book, Mr Monotony—you understand?”

“ If I had suspected you as my *enemy*, friend Madrake”—

“ Well, then, you have now the opportunity of giving me the *cut* which is to separate.”

“ No, Madrake, ‘ I have put my affairs,’ as Cicero says, ‘ under a gentle regimen, and, in all the cures I am to apply for the future, have renounced the use of the surgeon’s knife.’ ”

“ Amiable Mr Monotony ! Though gifted with the indefatigable spirit of another Julius Cæsar, do not suppose me guilty of the ingratitude which blackened the career of that famous adventurer. Rather let me transpose one word, and say in the language of Virgil—that beautiful name, which always reminds me of flowers—*Invitus, Monotony, tuo de littore cessi*.—Stop, I must put a pin into this little rent, the neat proceeds of which have just produced me Monsieur Diabolique.”

“ Monsieur Diabolique ! ” exclaimed Mr Monotony ; “ Is that a name ? ”

“ Not only a name, Mr Monotony, but a

name that, like yours and mine, and Dr Kitchener's, very aptly applies. You have not the honour, I believe, of being acquainted with this little piece of *diablerie*?"

"No, i'faith, Madrake! I suspect you, and the Devil's Elixir, to be already more than enough for me. But why will you not allow me to look out upon the moving figures of my panorama, eh?"

"My dear Mr Monotony, the sight would make me perfectly nervous."

"Not more so, I believe, than your own orthoëpy, good friend."

"My dear Monotony"—

—"Say no more, Mr Leonard; it is obvious that from every opinion of mine you are resolved to dissent—the proper *prôneur*, I suspect, of M. Diabolique. Methinks, with Count Bussy, that it becomes a man in disgrace rather to be silent than to speak; for either he is troublesome if he talks of his misfortunes, or ridiculous if he pretends to be merry."

"Nevertheless, Sir, you should remember,

that a good opinion of one's self, is a right which cannot be made a monopoly of."

"Mr Madrake, 'you are master of your own occasions.'"

"Ha! sire, c'était une autre chose—une autre chose. I must, however, seek to win back your grace."

"No, Madrake, like Lord Godolphin, things must be worse before they can be better. What, pray, can be expected from a creature, whose whole life is only one repeated scene of frivolity, and with not even the strength of mind sufficient to support *that*?"

"My dear Mr Monotony, though you could never have suspected it of a person who has done nothing but attend balls, play cards, and go out to dinner, I feel yet within me that spirit which burns, nay fights, to be distinguished. And now, as a certain depression of the atmosphere announces thunder, I feel that there is something extraordinary about to happen me."

"At that rate, my dear Madrake, it is high

time that we were restored to our own quiet domicile. You dine with me of course?"

"No, I dine with the Edmonstones, and sup with Mrs Fife."

Mr Monotony held up both hands. "The Panorama is nothing to this!"

"Nor the M'Farlane Repository."

"Nor the Lumberfield Laboratory—"

"Which is now knocked on the head: the evil spirits poured from the phials; and the body stirring salves from the boxes.—You do not know, I suppose, that I met that very person, who was supposed to be sinking quietly into her grave, at a rout!"

"Well, then, you may leave her to her better fate. As for me, it is sufficient at all times that I should wish to be interested in yourself. In fact, I believe that even *you* have made me feel too much: I find myself discontented with this day's trajet, and am only happy to know that, though we rode in the dark, we are now safely arrived in the rain."

"You will give me your carriage to ——— Place, whither I must repair to dress?"

“ I will rather pay for one, Madrake. At sixty-six years of age it is no time to run risks; my men might ramble, and keep me on the fidgets.—But get you gone, and, pray, when you come back again, let it be *after* having been with Mrs Fife.”——

“ Well, Mr Madrake, I am so happy to see you,” said Mrs Edmonstone, as he entered that lady’s reception room: “ By some wonderful accident you are come first.”

“ Less by accident this time than by intention, my dear Mrs Edmonstone. I came to give you a piece of advice.”

“ Well, Mr Madrake, I shall be happy to hear it.”

“ Whether or no, you shall have it for your advantage. Your daughter, though only sixteen years of age, in fact only just come out, is beloved by a young man who, for the present, holds the illustrious situation of under-clerk in a banking-house?”

“ It is true, Mr Madrake.”

“ The young lady, too, though not equally bewitched, has no aversion for the gentleman?”

“ Perhaps that is likewise true, Mr Madrake.”

“ Then let them instantly be betrothed.”

“ My dear Mr Madrake, my daughter is very young; and, though not a fortune, will certainly be independent. The young gentleman, too, will soon tire of his penchant, in the same manner as others have worn out of their first love.”

“ Nevertheless, I must beseech you to take my advice. I am not joking, Mrs Edmonstone.”

“ No, certainly you are not joking, Mr Madrake; for, indeed, you have got on a very serious face.”

“ If you have, then, faith in my friendship, or any confidence in my honour, you will do as I tell you.”

“ My dear Mr Madrake, I am no intriguing mother, searching for settlements; but if, in your great friendship for this young man, you should have the misfortune to bring trouble into my family, what remedy will you then be able—when all is to late—to suggest too me?”

“ Your wit, your temper, your obliging disposition, and your kind hospitality, cannot avail you then, Madam.”

“ A woman’s, and more particularly a mother’s fears, Mr Madrake”——

“ And will you still persist in opposing doubts to my friendship ?”

“ Well, then, I submit.”

“ Then the triumph shall be yours ; and that in spite of all the Lumsdaines’ success.”

The arrival of company precluded further debate. After the details of the dinner had been exhausted, and the ladies withdrawn, Mr Edmonstone’s gentlemen entertained themselves and one another with Lord Fiddle-faddle’s intended purchase of the great M’Farlane Repository ; to improve which Lord Fiddle-faddle was now actively engaged in perfecting his mineralogical cabinet ; in order to complete which, again, his Lordship was in search of a piece of soap-stone—the fellow of a shell—and the jaws of a full grown elephant. His Lordship was also in want of specimens of six newly discovered Van Diemen’s grasses.

Great difficulties, however, lay in the way of this mighty junction of the East Indian and North of Europe commodities. The soap-stone

must not be white, or sallow-coloured: it must be brown, to strike the minds of the more numerous portion of the creation with an instantaneous conviction of its resemblance. In respect to this piece of strata, Lord Fiddle-faddle—or, as Madrake now chose to denominate him, Lord Fiddle-faddle-fyke—had not as yet proved successful. The fellow to the shell alone was about to appear; called into life, it seems, by the affecting sum of thirty guineas. The elephant's jaws had not presented themselves in language of sufficient purity; and there was a dispute about the six new found specimens of Van Diemen's grasses.

The *cognoscenti* part of the company entered warmly into Lord Fiddle-faddle's present pursuits; the more sensible kept up the ball, in order that they might enjoy the happiness of finding themselves diverted by the chase.

There was one person, however, upon whom they all pitched for a solution of his Lordship's difficulties; and this was the elder Mr Hyndford. This prettily behaved young gentleman and his brother had been what is called picture-

bit; and the person to whom, under the full influence of their *mania*, they had now committed themselves for the sometimes useful purpose of drawing blood, was the man who alone was fitted to extricate the illustrious, or rather notorious, Lord Fiddle-faddle from his difficulties.

But in the mean time, as it is proper to separate this new hero of our story from the more meretricious and mixty-maxty nicknacks of Baron Fiddle-faddle, we shall devote a new chapter to the better canonization of a person, who, having flourished in the sublime art himself, is now content to dabble in the more meritorious works of others, and who may, like Augustus Cæsar, “make auctions of pictures with their backs to the company,”—so much esteemed is his judgment and discretion in reference to all continental imported specimens of the sublime arts, and their sometimes sublime prices.

CHAPTER VI.

“ It being but seldom that time is lost in the accomplishment of a wicked enterprise, Carathis and her negresses soon arrived at the lake.

“ ‘ Will this content?’ said the fishes, ‘ for we do not delight in expanding our mouths.’

“ ‘ It will,’ returned Carathis: ‘ I am not to learn that you are not used to long conversations.’ ”

VATHEK.

IN a large crimson apartment, magnificently hung round with paintings, were assembled in close consultation three live objects. Two were tall, handsome, and stately; the third was little, dark and squat. This last was Mr Francis Tinto, the champion proprietor of the hall himself.

One of the taller heroes had, after a great deal of squibble-squabbling, at last seated himself, and, with his legs stretched out, and

his hands well lodged in his breeches pockets, was now gazing wistfully upon a landscape picture *said* to be by Cuyp; while his thoughts ever and anon reverted to the unconscious, and still more unconscionable price, of the bit of canvass before him. Mr Tinto in the mean time was dusting, at some little distance, and likewise in thought, a parcel of unframed sketches, which he, in like mind of absence, had already dusted some sixteen times before. The younger brother of the Chair was pacing the room with scarecrow strides, with thoughts equally devoted to the will of the winds and to the taste of the picture-dealer.

“That picture is worth the money I *know*, Tinto,” said the elder brother in the chair, after a long silence by all parties. “But, Tinto, it is not for me to——You understand me?”

Mr Tinto continued to dust his pictures.

“That tree in perspective is particularly fine,” observed the younger connoisseur, addressing his brother of the scarecrow legs;—and that young gentleman, having drawn up beside the outstretched limbs of the said sounding-

board, both descanted with considerable technical ingenuity on the merits of the affair before them.

“Your collection is very good: But you have nothing like it, and that I *will* say,” said Mr Tinto, seeing his opportunity—for his naturally shrewd, and now well-experienced eye could detect, under the mask of the greatest indifference, the inmost wishes and most secret workings in the mind of a purchasing connoisseur.

“He’s in the right,” said the younger brother with a look of fixed importance. “I really think you have got nothing like it.”

“Oh, I know he’s in the right, Campbell: I know it. But you know how much our father would have disapproved of this very high buying of pictures—though he loved a bargain in that way too, by the bye.—But it won’t do, Tinto,” he added, resuming his own pretty voice of command.

“Never mind then,” returned his host, taking up a sponge to one of the dusted sketches; “it

will do for my Lord F—— ; him you call Liberality sometimes.”

“ You will not let him have it without first consulting me, however, Tinto ?”

“ Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Only, if you be out of town, you know ?”

“ Why, yes, there is some danger of that. But tell me at once, how long Lord F—— will take this time to his bargain.”

“ That no man can tell.”

“ But Tinto—but Tinto, without a joke, you will not send it away without my talking it over again, will you ?”

“ Well, well, I’ll tell you now what I will do with you ;” and Mr Tinto advanced, sponge in hand, quite close up to the seat of judgment. “ You, Douglas Hyndford, Esquire, will hand me, Francis Tinto, one little cheque for just six hundred pounds ; and I, Francis Tinto, will see the best picture in all Europe hung up in your own dining-room to-morrow morning before you get breakfast.—George,” he continued, going towards the door, which he now very

opportunately opened, "George, stand you here and be ready."

"Not in the dining-room, Tinto. Such a picture as that must have a place in the boudoir, beside those little things of Wouvermanns and Ostade; and it can hang"—

—"Oh, yes, yes, yes! we shall hang it where you please;—and, Mr Campbell, you can take this Dead Christ with you in the mean time.—Here, George, take this picture up to Mr Campbell Hyndford's, and desire them to take good care of it till I come up myself to see it put right."

The absence, however, of his flappers, his brother and Mr Tinto, caused Douglas Hyndford, Esquire, to shrink once more from his purpose.

"No, Tinto," he exclaimed, as the two returned from the safe dismissal of the Dead Saviour; "I have changed my mind—I won't have it;" and he rose in order the better to shake himself free of the spell."

But the spell did not break. "Suppose, he added," you should give me a week to think of

it; and that I should, in the mean time, take Michael Angelo in its place.

“ I will be with you in one moment,” cried Mr Tinto, flying from this proposal. “ Campbell Hyndford, Esquire, I beg your pardon.—Stay, George, stay; come back. Here are some caricatures, and a proof of Knox and Mary, which you will find in my dining-room. And if Mr Hyndford should wish a copy of it,” he added, now returning to the scene of scratch, “ he may have one.—Pray, Sir, what was you telling me about the Buonarotti?”

“ You are certain, Tinto, by the mark, that it is *really* a Buonarotti?” inquired the elder Hyndford.

“ If it is not—then nothing that you see here is mine.”

“ Still it will not—and Campbell agrees with me—compare with the Cuyp.”

“ No; I confess it will not.—But sit down, if you will so far honour me—for, by the powers! you cannot go very far in this bad day.” And the three, resolving themselves once

more into a knot, sat club down before the fireplace.

The *trio* sat for forty minutes; during all which time not a single sound transpired, but an occasional sigh,—for there is a secret trouble in every breast,—and a few tingle-ingles at the hall door bell, which were not permitted, however, any farther to disturb the thoughtful congress within.

“ I could wish, after all, that I had that Cuyp,” said the elder Hyndford at last. “ It would be lost, don’t you think, up in the north with Lord F——— ?”

“ Completely buried,” groaned the brother.

“ Will you take me a bet?” demanded Mr Tinto, once more looking alive, and seizing his time for a hit.

“ Have no objections.”

“ Well, then, I wager you ten pounds to one, that you have that very picture of glorious Cuyp’s in your own house to-morrow morning—ay, by half-past ten o’clock.”

“ Well, then, do, Tinto, and take the five.”

“ Take the five ! I will do no such thing.—

And, harkee, Mr Hyndford,—and you should know Francis Tinto well by this time,—if you do not give me six, I will soon make it seven. So take ye *that*, thou grand patron of all the arts—the wind can blow.”

“ Well, Tinto, you are a good sort of creature after all ; and I dare say you will soon make me up to Lord E—— whether I will or no.—By the bye, Campbell, what was it you were talking to me about that Coronation of the Madonna, in the Borgian apartments at Rome, by”——

—“ Stay, before you say another word,” interrupted Mr Tinto, “ I must tell you, that that picture is not worth one groat. That is, I mean, you know, it cannot be compared with that in the little church of St M—— in the district of —— . Yes, gentlemen, you may well be surprised ; for I’ll be bound to say that the picture I was talking of is one of the first, the very first, in the whole universal world !”

“ And the master, Tinto ?”

“ And the master is this same Buonarotti.—But I beg ten thousand pardons ! Campbell Hyndford, Esquire, you was once in Italy and

France, and of course you spent a fortnight in examining that picture?"

Campbell Hyndford, Esquire, looked rather blank, for he was ashamed to say, that though he had passed through the country of ———, the little church of St M—— had never even been recommended to him.

"You did not see it then? What a misfortune! However, that does not signify very much now; for I believe," he added with a tone of indescribable self-composure, "that very picture is now to be sold."

"Of course, Tinto, you will look after it next year when you go over?"

"I may. But I will not find it."

"But, dear me! how came such a chef-d'œuvre to be sold; the more especially since it was church property, and might therefore be supposed to have been sacred?"

"Give me another pinch of your good snuff, Campbell Hyndford, Esquire; and I will tell the whole story just as it happened.

"It was the property, you must know, of a nobleman, who got permission from the priests to

build it up into the walls of the church, and that in the hopes that the French—those rascals the French, you know—would not wait so long as should be required to take it out. And so it happened. The French cried *Vive l'Empereur*; and the grand picture, instead of being carried to Paris, was allowed to come to Edinburgh, to *my* care.”

“ But where, where is the picture *now*?” exclaimed both his auditors at once.

“ In that large packing-box at Mr Hyndford’s back.”

A slight colour passed over the faces of the brothers, while they suppressed, with well-bred presence of mind, the exclamation of great surprise which now rose to their lips.

“ Very well,” they merely observed in a stifled voice ;—“ but, pray, unpack.”

Mr Tinto unpacked what was already unpacked—for Mr Tinto could do every thing,—and in time displayed to view a very fine Madonna, large as in life.

“ Behold !” he said, with well assumed enthusiasm, “ Michael Angelo—The god !”

“ Behold rather the goddess,” observed Mr Douglas Hyndford, whose enthusiasm was not intended to be *just* so highly coloured.

“ Ah ! that is the treasure !”

“ Well then, Tinto, I must have it.”

“ You will have the little landscape first; for I will not put away this one in a hurry.”

“ O yes, of course, Tinto—my brother has decided upon that already,” observed Mr Campbell Hyndford.

“ Why, Campy, if I take the first, you know I can’t have the second,” cried the elder brother, descending again to the familiar. “ Besides, I suppose this said Michael Angelo will ask a third more than the other.”

“ It shall not pass my door under two thousand guineas, that you may be assured of.” And Mr Tinto, like a skilful general who brings up his full host of reserves just at the important crisis, now openly and boldly triumphed in his resources.

“ Well, well, Tinto,” answered Mr Douglas Hyndford, and seating himself at Mr Tinto’s portable desk; “ Bank-stock is coming down ;

national credit is done up ; and the country is going to the devil.—Here is an order for one thousand pounds. Here, Campbell, hand Mr Tinto his one thousand pounds.”

“ Let me see——thank you, in the first place, Mr Campbell—Campbell the Great, we ought to call you. Ay, one thousand ! Well now, gentlemen, observe——Do you see that fire ? Then there goes your one thousand pounds. It burns purely, too, as you see.”

“ Well, Tinto, I think I must have been in the right, when I could not endure to look at a picture-dealer.”

“ Nay, nay, nay, my good dear Mr Hyndford. What ! you won’t be angry with me ? For I would give—ay, would give one half of all I have—in the picture way—to be friends with you again. And now, while I am speaking, who but I would deny himself to six-and-twenty people, to sit down quietly, and hear himself”—

—“ O yes, we *know*, we *know*, Tinto ! But, in the name of Heaven, Tinto, do you really expect two thousand guineas for that bit of canvass ?”

“ I will not tell you what I expect,” returned Mr Tinto doggedly.

The elder Mr Hyndford rose, took Mr Tinto by both arms, and continued to shake him for several minutes without intermission. “ Now tell me this moment, thou piece of varnish and paint-brush, what is thy-present design and intention? Have you promised Lord F——, have you promised young G——, have you promised Lord E—— ?”

“ Lord bless you ! my Lord E—— has now got enough—so I am told. But, Gods preserve us ! won’t you leave a little bit life in me to sell a picture with ?”

“ Then tell at once what you intend: *On your conscience, now.*”

“ Well, I *will* tell you what I intend—only you promise all the time to agree to it.”

“ Well, say.”

“ Campbell Hyndford, Esq. there, shall have the Cuyp landscape, and his brother shall have the chef-d’œuvre—that is, the Madonna—the Madonna of Michael Angelo Buonarotti. And then,” he continued, raising his dwarf voice—

for the last name was rather a little indistinct, “ I will say, that there is not two other such collections in Edinburgh;—no, not in all Europe !”

“ Come, come, Tinto, don’t humbug us—but, *seriously* speaking, would you advise us to this?”

“ Me advise ! I do not advise ; but I would only say, that there is no other method for it.”

“ Well, then, I think we have had a good day’s work of it. But I say, Tinto,”—and he reduced his voice to the lowest possible whisper—“ You will not claim the odd hundred, will you ?”

“ Well, well ; we’ll see, we’ll see.”

“ And do you hear, Tinto, not a word of this to any body—only, when you see Lord F—— you may add an odd thousand or two upon the lot. Good morning.—Dear me ! it’s past five o’clock.”

“ And good morning to you, too, Campbell Hyndford, Esquire.—Stay,” he added, letting the door as it were by accident close upon the brother who had just gone out ; “ I just want to speak one word with you. You, Campbell

Hyndford, Esquire, shall have your picture down fifty pounds."

"I certainly am obliged to you, Mr Tinto, and think my brother very fortunate in having fallen into such good hands. But, good morning; I have already lost time, and have kept Suttie waiting me for the last five hours at the Club."

This answer served very well; for Mr Tinto was himself in haste to entertain a pair of half-starved picture cleaners, whom he had been in the habit of occasionally and very economically employing, ever since the lucky day he had changed from picture-painting to picture-selling.

"Who will say that Francis Tinto does not know what he is about?" he repeated, as his two lantern-jawed comroques continued on to munch and rive at a well-grown turkey pullet. "I say, you two, don't you hear me?"

The knives and forks were laid down *instantly*.

"O, eat away—eat away. You are welcome as long as Francis Tinto has to give. But you won't attend—there's the mischief!"

“ Stop, friend Camballas, and let us listen to what our host has got to communicate,” said Delempo.

“ I communicate nothing, friend Delempo ; I communicate nothing.” And Mr Tinto very jocosely regaled the pair with a song.

“ Come, why won’t you drink ? has not Francis Tinto filled his purse this very day with one thousand pounds ! hey ?”

“ Hah ! sold off de whole stock ?”

“ Sold off my whole stock ! I sold off but two pictures—the very fellows which you saw in my great picture-room.”

Signiors Camballas and Delempo shook their heads. They had seen nothing that called for so much, even in the gross, as one thousand pounds.

“ What ! do you doubt ? but come you this way, and I will shew, ay, what I will shew——there !!!”

The two picture-cleaners, who were men of some education and intelligence, appeared pleased with the Cuyp landscape ; but looked rather dullish upon the Madonna.

“ Well, what say you to’t ?”

“ It be no Michael Angelo Buonarotti,” said the one.

“ It be no Michael Angelo Caravaggio,” said the other.

“ No ?”

“ No.”

“ Why, then, gentle-men——there be *more* Michael Angelos. Here, give me a snuff.”

To this snuff succeeded two or three rounds of good stout punch, with a more than full accompaniment of songs and chorusses of all kinds, classes, and denominations.

Their patron, Mr Tinto, was most hospitable. “ You will come back soon,” he said, as he helped them on with their jaded camblet cloaks. “ Let me see—on Tuesday next week I am to have some people with me, and you will come also.—But I say, Camballas, won’t you shake hands with me? Tush ! tush ! tush ! don’t you be saying one word now ; Francis Tinto will not be sixpence poorer for twenty shillings. He labours, to be sure, to please the idle rich ; but why should he shut his heart against the in-

dustrious poor? He is himself no scholar, no linguist—he knows little of his art, but what he has picked up from the opinion of others. But then, he can shew the will to be *good*, though it should be next to impossible with him ever to be *great*.——Good-night to you—good-night to you.”

The haste with which the hospitable Tinto had helped the Chevaliers Camballas and Delempo to their rather *passés manteaux*, was occasioned by his eagerness to make way for another visitor, whom he expected to arrive in nothing less than the sacred tranquillity of midnight.

This mysterious visitor, then, was our friend Lord Fiddle-faddle, to whom, notwithstanding the weight and importance of his picture-dealing transactions, Mr Tinto had been recommended as more dexterous than any body else in pursuing, to the utmost depths of their recesses, all the most hidden, as well as most dispersed, treasures of antique rarities, bijouterie, and nick-nacks. In a word, Lord Fiddle-faddle and our friend Tinto had, with mutual satisfaction, sought out one another. The former,

because the utmost exertions of his own strength must fall far short of Mr Tinto's almost intuitive knowledge in such transactions; the latter, because Lord Fiddle-faddle, as a fresh man, would require little trouble in being made to "pay the piper;"—and, as an instance, had he not contrived to purchase the celebrated M'Farlane Repository from Mrs Fife?——

We shall leave, however, these congenials, in order to return the sooner to the more important characters of our drama, satisfied that our readers are prepared for the step we are about to take, from a conviction that, however interesting Mr Tinto and Lord Fiddle-faddle's discussion might be, no remnants of the subject were destined to come either their way or ours.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Un bruit assez étrange est arrivé jusqu’à moi ;
Seigneur, je l’ai jugé trop peu digne de foi.”

RACINE.

IN opposition to Miss M‘Tavish, Betty Wade, and others, Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle lived together upon the *very best* terms. For a rule to shew cause,—The lungs of healthy blooming Mr Augustus Maringle were gone in search of his calves ; and in spite of dogs, drinking, hunting, fencing, that pretty faced apple now toppled over “ a gowan-bed.” Mr Augustus Maringle’s health had just been pronounced “ precarious ;” in other words, Mr Augustus Maringle was now advanced half-way in a deep and rapid decline. The desire of receiving every care and attention requisite for the speedy restoration of his health, reconciled the

husband; a suspicion of the truth reconciled the wife. Mr Maringle must not be told that there was any thing the matter with him. Mrs Maringle must keep up an appearance of gaiety, as much to deceive her husband as to please herself. The gentleman must receive company either at home, or meet with it abroad. The lady must encourage him in this, in order that she may the more easily get rid of both him and his deep hollow cough;—the fatal sofa must be reserved, like Desdemona's bed, for the last solemn act in the performance.

Out of gratitude for his having released them of their promise of presenting him and his wife to the Lady Patronesses of Almacks and the *haut ton*, early in the month of May, and of touring them through the continent at the conclusion of the London season, Lord and Lady Aloof and family were this day to honour Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle with their company at dinner. Of course, Mr Maringle must not undergo any previous agitation or fatigue; but still, intoxicated with the imagined sympathy of his former supporters, the

stand-off Aloofs, he must exhaust the last portion of his waning strength to make them sensible how much he relished the compliment expressed by their presence. No morning visitors then must be admitted; and the crowd of fashionables must have the benefit of saving their time at the expense of their name, with which, by the way, they are sometimes tolerably profuse, possibly from an idea that there is nothing in it so very much worth.

N'importe, whether it was the excessive care that was employed in nursing his fading spirits for his interview with the august Aloofs, or that he was already prepared for this last piece of attention, Mr Augustus Maringle had his dining-room sofa this day begarnished with half a dozen pillows, &c. &c. (with an India coverlet, to be used on occasion), preparatory to that last sad final campaign with death, which was destined to fill up the short, though perhaps too long period of eight days; and of which this was to be the first.—

Much more agreeably employed were the occupants of Mrs Dudd's Residenz, where, soon

after breakfast, upon this very morning, arrived Miss Kicklecackle, for the express and declared purpose of being pressed to consent to marry her dear Johnny Wilkes—Mr Jonathan Hochytoch. That gilligapus had been, at last, brought to the disagreeable conviction, that Mr Dudd condescended only to make a cat's-paw of him; and, alarmed at the same time by the sight of a decided flirtation between his Dulcinea and a smart writer's apprentice, who possibly hoped to assist his degrees with a little of her cash, he had now come to the laudable resolution of *insisting* upon a marriage with that child of torment and frolic, Miss Catherine Kicklecackle.

Indeed, if Miss Kicklecackle had been going to be decapitated, or perhaps, which would have been equally agreeable to her taste, hanged, and had seen but one ludicrous face amongst the crowd, we really believe that her last groans would have been changed into so many laughs. As it was, her screams on the present occasion were heard resounding and rebounding through every part of the house.

Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger were engaged in a profound consultation concerning a plan for taking stables, horses, dogs, grooms, helpers and all, into their own hands; for, having taken it into their silly noddles to build a pleasure-yacht upon the banks of Loch-Lomond, these personages were getting restive for the first time upon the score of mine host of the cavalry of Charge-the-Devil's livery stables, whom they had now wisely determined to jockey, by *previously* running down a few of his helpers and assistants; from whose report, *par consequent*, their enemy, as he was forewarned, was also to be forearmed, and so prepared to *do* them to their very heart's content.

"What next?" said M'Ginger, looking up with an air of great complacency to his brother spice, and pressing the butt-end of his new-fangled pencil-case with great thinking importance to his chin.

"Stay a moment," was Vonpepper's wise reply, "till we have got peace."

"I guess that long laugh to be a Kicklecackle," gravely returned M'Ginger.

“ Why, my dear Ginger, the girl (if it’s her) must be in a fit.”

“ O, no, just a laugh—just a laugh—that’s all.”

“ Now, my dear fellow, why *will* you always contradict?”

“ Why, Mr Vonpepper, I should say—without quoting a proverb—that it is *you* who always contradict.”

“ What ! will you dare to add to your rudeness by forcing the lie down my very throat !!! I say, Sir,”——

“ Well, well, Tom, never mind ; don’t let us worry one another *just* yet. I think one row at a time enough in a house. Certainly that girl Kicklecackle must have taken a fit.”

“ Why then,” cried the Pepper becalmed, “ we must think of a cure for her.”

“ Well, I’ll go and reconnoitre. Mercy ! I think she’s getting worse and worse.”

M’Ginger proceeded to the point of *espionage*, the balustrade, from which he shortly returned with the melancholy intelligence, that what he had so long suspected was at last come to pass,—

viz. “that Miss Kicklecackle had gone mad.” This delightful intelligence brought Mr Vonpepper likewise to the scratch.

In this exalted situation our two sons—we cannot say heroes—of the West, were regaled from time to time with a sight of Miss Kicklecackle, as she fled from one room to another in all the disorder of a mad delirious laugh. She was followed, though more at leisure, by Mr Hochytoch, who seemed to have something very important to impart; and after him by Mrs Dudd, who could only gain the door of one room as Miss Kicklecackle threw herself into another; and by a little giddy-brained chamber-maid, who, in humble imitation of the heroine of the piece, kept fizzing below the West Indian balcony in a style that would have done honour to the most accomplished workings of a small-beer bottle, rakishly called swipes.

“Jane!” whispered Vonpepper.

“Jane!” echoed his companion spice.

“Jane!” cried both at once.

“Coming, Sir!” said Jane, scarcely able to speak, and mounting up by slow ascents, as if

in fear lest her over burden of good spirits should every instant explode.

“ Pray, Jane, my good girl, can you tell us what is the matter with Miss Kicklecackle this morning?”

Jane could only laugh.

“ Come, come, Jane; remember the man with the cheap caps; that gewgaw on your head makes too much of a religious appearance to last for ever, I suspect.”

“ It’s only Mr Hochytoch,” replied Jane, thus called to order, “ that wants to marry Miss Kicklecackle.”

“ Marry Kicklecackle !!!” screamed both pickles at once; and, plunging down stairs, they made direct for the scene of contest. They paused, however, at the threshold, not willing, like the hero of the golden egg, to sacrifice the occasion of their pleasure to their impatience.

Within the chamber, then, the door of which confusion had left open, were assembled the inexpressible figures of Mrs Dudd, Miss Kicklecackle, and Mr Hochytoch. Mr Hochytoch, pursuer; Mrs Dudd, counsel; Miss Kicklecackle,

defendant. Miss Kicklecackle, tired of flight, had seated herself, and was now inclined to listen between the breaths of every laugh. Mr Hochytoch and Mrs Dudd kept patting her coaxingly from time to time upon the back.

“Nownae, dawty, nownae,” were the first words that fell from their gawsie mediatrix, Mrs Dudd.

Miss Kicklecackle became more composed.

The deceitful calm decoyed Mr Hochytoch; he ventured to take her hand, and Miss Kicklecackle, shrinking from his touch like another goblin dwarf, set up a dozen of shrieks and screams at once.

“Whisht! whisht, dawty! whisht! whisht! whisht!”

Miss Kicklecackle saw that Mrs Dudd wished peace, fearing, perhaps, the return of her *cara sposa*, who, as he did nothing like any body else, was gone upon some distant market speculation; and Miss Kicklecackle went off into another set of screams, the pauses between which, as she was now beginning to recover

breath, she contrived to fill up with a few occasional bursts of laughter.

Mr Hochytoch himself began to waver; and, excited as much by rage this time as by love, he changed his fond “sheep’s eye” into a glare of fierce resentment; and, finally, shook his fists in desperation in her face.

This extravagant action, like another loadstone, drew in the two combustible needles, M’Ginger and Vonpepper, who, like gunpowder, needed only a hint, and who presented themselves just in time to save Miss Kicklecackle the variety of a convulsion fit.

As some people imagine themselves glass, and that consequently whoever comes near them must prove the instruments of their demolition, that facetious young lady took it into her head that Messrs M’Ginger and Vonpepper had come to the scratch for the charitable purpose of interfering with—through what instigation she knew not—or, perhaps, putting a stop altogether to the match; and she calmed in such a manner as declared how little she felt herself indebted to them for their interference.

The two spices, who had sense enough not to await the disgraceful favour of being “politely requested to withdraw,” accordingly took themselves off; and the volatile Miss Kicklecackle now suffered herself, through the respectable agency of Mrs Dudd, to be *evened* with Mr Jonathan Hochytoch; also agreeing in her terror that the nuptial morning should be fixed for that day week, though Mr Dudd had the address to get it afterwards prorogued till after the *roupings*, in order that they might have the advantage, with his valuable assistance, of a choice of goods as well as of prices—a sort of *emploi* particularly adapted to his genius and his taste. In fact, that gentleman had even the address to place the parties in a house which he afterwards contrived to subset to them, with no small advantage to himself; as well as to contract for such appointments as a post-chaise to the manse of ———, the worthy pastor of which Mr and Mrs Dudd had luckily entertained while in attendance upon last year’s General Assembly;—a farewell dinner at a tavern to Mr Hochytoch’s bachelor acquaintance;—a hackney-coach

to take up and set down the priest who was to officiate at the ceremonial;—and a bride's-cake, which was to serve the entire of both bride and bridegroom's male and female acquaintances. In all which details, Mr Dudd discovered his activity, as well as his inclination, to profit by all adventitious or extraordinary events.

In the mean time, that gentleman non-descript had just returned from an expedition to the village of ———, whither he had been to cheapen poultry and butter at the fountain-head, though a serious contriver of profitable channels in all such transactions himself, and just in time, too, as it would seem, to witness the vast effects of his own dexterity; for it was he who, when the matter could no longer without danger be protracted or delayed, had got his wife to advise with Miss Kicklecackle, while he spurred on her own Othello, Mr Hochytoch; the wisdom of which management was such as has been shewn. Nay, further, he was even prepared to consult *instantly* with the relatives of the young lady herself, who now forthwith arrived in all haste in a hack-chaise, just at the

very moment that some of Mr Dudd's rather *quondam* relations arrived from Pennycuik, or some such place, on a visit, in a cart—a surprise in its way so little to the purpose, as renewed in Miss Kicklecackle her (for a while) suspended faculties of folly, fun, and frolic; seriously annoyed Mrs Dudd; and made Mr Hochytoch look as black, according to Miss Kicklecackle's polite simile, as twelve o'clock at night.

Such, gentle reader, were the happy, though somewhat different, developments of character; and such the results of the many and various operations which had this day affected the respective Residenzas of Mr Augustus Maringle and Mr Dudd.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ For, in those days, the devil was seen to walk the streets of Granada.”

Old Chronicle.

LIKE the retaliating maxims of the Gil Blas of Le Sage, however, we shall find that Mr Dudd and his *domicile* were not destined to bear the bell in every thing. In opposition to the hackney chaise of the Kicklecackles, who, being on affairs of importance, may be safely allowed a truce with parade—the open equipage of the sma’ grocer, Willie-a’thing—and an old coal-cart and horse, the twin of Don Quixotte’s Rosinante, which happened likewise to appear at the muster head; there were gathered before the door of the Right Honourable the Viscountess Aloof that very handsome four-in-hand concern, which appeared—and which still appears—in

the train of that accomplished host, the ——— Dragoon Guards; a knot of thorough-bred saddle tits; a coroneted coach; and two highly emblazoned chariots, which patrolled in front. Nevertheless, in spite of this bustle without, there was nothing but quiet within. The intense and rigid decorum of Lady Aloof and her family extended even to the clean kept areas both before and behind, as well as to the domestics contained within the interior precincts of the *sanctorum*.

Lady Aloof—the *prima donna*—reposed on the sacred sofa; her son and daughter were seated dos-à-dos on a chaise-longue. Lord Fiddle-faddle and Lord Liberality were engaged at an embrasure of a window in rather a metaphysical kind of discussion concerning the respective merits of Zuccherelli and Peter de Bloot; from which they had now insensibly adjourned to those of De Heush, pupil of Both; and from him again to the incomparable Teniers; when, quarrelling upon the composition of some of that master's performances, Lord Liberality quoted

the broad and facile pencil of Albert Cuyp, and Lord Fiddle-faddle the Interiors of Peter Neefs.

Opposed to them were the figures of Campbell Hyndford, Charles Suttie, Sir George Terrorfield, and Monsieur Diabolique. Two mothers and two daughters, the inhabitants of the patroling chariots, were dispersed up and down the fore-ground.

Unlike, however, most domestic levees, the ladies had the least share in the debate. Lady Aloof sat grave, solemn, and alone. The two mothers and daughters merely waited upon her, that they might have it afterwards told that they were admitted amongst the *elite* who attended the Aloofs. Lady Aloof was cunning enough to guess upon what principles they paid their court; and, in conjunction with her daughter and the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick, would treat them accordingly. And these ladies, repulsed on all sides, yet loathing to be seen too soon to depart, were now clubbed together for the purpose of indulging in the exercise of a polite series of questions and replies under breath, concerning all and every thing at

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present *en train* in the fashionable, or, as it happens oftener, the consequential world. Insignificant as they and their concerns were, however, they served as an excuse for *La dame de Maison* interesting herself in the asthmatic complaints of the Countess of the coroneted coach, who had taken possession of the dining-room below for want of breath to climb to the suite above.

“Do, Charles James, do go and see Lady Carruthers to her carriage.”

Her Ladyship Aloof pronounced these words, however, in such a freezing scale of voice as fixed Charles James still more effectually to his seat.

“Perhaps Miss Aloof will,” said Charles James, *alias* Don Pompadosa—and he smiled a smile of true unmeaning vapid listlessness.

Miss Aloof compressed her lips as if she had been pinched; and the coroneted coach rolled away untouched.

Don Pompadosa did not hear it; he was busily engaged in noting the *empressement* of Campbell Hyndford’s manner while talking with Sir George Terrorfield, who displayed still more *gaucherie*—even so much as to frighten away

Monsieur Diabolique, who appeared to take refuge by himself upon an unoccupied ottoman. This step M. Diabolique took, in order that he might not commit himself to Campbell Hyndford, whom a most convenient sort of *presentiment* informed him was about to apply for his assistance. To condescend upon the cause of feud—Mr Campbell Hyndford wanted to become *one* of Sir George Terrorfield and Charles Suttie's 'select early club,' the formation of which had now excited the consideration of the *haut ton*, merely because the numbers were limited to nine.

"You won't have me then, Terrorfield?" doled forth Campbell Hyndford.

"Why, man," cried Charles Suttie, "he wants you to get in, and you must."

"Then, begging your pardon, Mr Charles Suttie," said the Baronet, boldly engaging them both, "I say he shall not."

"Well, well, Terrorfield," rejoined Campbell Hyndford, in the same tone of easy indifferent nonchalance; "you remember the case of a certain Laird of Fife of that ilk, who wore

over his colours the inscription—‘*Perissim nisi perissim* ;’ which, being interpreted, signifies, —‘ You attempted to *dish* me, and therefore I shall *dish* you.’ When you come to *want* me, then you shall know the truth of the position.”

“ Why, what would you have?” returned Terrorfield gravely; and who, though he could be in league with, was not altogether very sure of Monsieur Diabolique; and who felt, for the moment, somewhat afraid lest he and Hyndford might yet, by taking Lord Aloof for a leader, get the heels of his intended establishment. “ Would you wish me to make nine ten, and so take in the universe?”

“ The universe is but a cipher, I *know*,” said Campbell Hyndford. “ But, pray, how are all your nine appointments to be filled up?”

“ Well, then, there are the two fathers, whom you behold before you—to wit, Charles Suttie and myself. Then we have Lord Aloof, his son Don Pompadosa, and Monsieur Diabolique. Au reste,—you are aware that my Lord Liberality has been lately appointed to a situation of consequence at court. After him, we elect Augus-

tus Maringle, because he will soon die, and leave his honours where he found them ; and my Lord Fiddle-faddle, because we mustn't appear to be actuated by party ; and, *ergo*, because he will not likely trouble us very much with his company."

" There is still the ninth to nominate."

" That must be kept open ; for, as we intend to become popular as well as *élevé*, we may chance to get, perhaps, my worthy neighbour the Duke of ——."

" The Duke of —— !!!"

" The Duke of ——."

" Then, for once, I had better tell you that he is not to be had."

" Neither you nor I know that. And then, though not particularly determined upon obliging *us*, he seems very anxious to be well with all sorts and classes. The compliment, too, he must take to be kindly meant."

" Well, then, supposing that he should, like the rest of the world, suspect you to be better than you are, whom have you got, pray, to act

the part of that delicate piece of Missy red-and-white, Augustus Maringle, eh?"

"Like kisses that melt, poor Maringle must die.—My good fellow, I suppose the post must be given to his brother," continued the Honourable Mr Suttie, who had, in consideration of his umquhile submission to the Terrorfield dynasty, the said post in reversion for himself and his friends, and who had already determined that it should *not* go to the brother. "But, pray, who were these ladies that went out just now? I can tell nobody in their morning-gowns."

"Never since your Regular accident, as we call it. By the bye, we had that stale tale doled out to us, by Tuesday, only last night."

"There is much in a name, as our harum-scarum friend Madrake has it; and had Julius Cæsar been called after my groom, Andrew M'Nab, or Simon Wrinklebottom" (lowering his voice) "after my valet, he never would have gained the empire, nor Sir James Methodical been so much of a witch." And the master of Suttie, now become a little facetious, pointed

“Faustus ways” upon little Monsieur Diabolique.

“The devil hath long ears,” says Francis Quarrels, or some other Quarrel; and assuredly Monsieur Diabolique heard, or imagined he heard, which is worse. Be that as it may, *Ce qui fut dit, fut fait.*

“Que demandez-vous, Messieurs; que demandez-vous?” And Monsieur Diabolique fixed his little fierce eyes—far back in the depths of which there shone the light of hate well fired—upon the council of management of the forthcoming select early club.

“*Sauve qui peut!*” hastily exclaimed Hyndford, who had *his* eyes still upon the early club.”

“Il n’y a pas de danger,” said Terrorfield, whose *forte* lay always in a *coup de main*. “Il n’y a pas de feu sans fumée.”

“We would have Diabolique, the autocrat of *ton*, our dictator!” cried Charles Suttie aloud; for Suttie, no more than Terrorfield, could rely on the fidelity of the Count; and a confederacy between Diabolique and the Aloofs, what could it not effect or produce?”

“ En parlant de beau et de superbe,” simpered wily Monsieur Diabolique; and who, again, as he distrusted every body, did not feel altogether very sure of his patron, my Lord Aloof; “ M. de Soottie a oublié qu’il ne pouvait s’agir que de lui.”

“ Really, Monsieur,” returned Charles Suttie, with similar sincerity, “ I must take advantage of your inimitable lesson in compliments, and submit some of them, while I can, to my Lady Aloof. For,—

“ ’Tis known he was a lad of wax,
Let *bellum* be the word, aut *pax*.”

And he approached the sacred sofa in concert with Lord Fiddle-faddle, who wanted to consult her on the dimensions of some pagan divinities made of rice-stone in the M’Farlane Repository.

“ You are not going, Mr Suttie?” said Lady Aloof, who saw people advance, only to see them as immediately retire.

No; Mr Suttie was come to receive from her Ladyship’s own lips the fate of her late aid-de-camp, Augustus Maringle.

“ O yes, Mr Maringle—I had forgot,” observed Lady Aloof, recovering herself: “ O yes, he is certainly dying—I always thought him a very foolish sort of lad.—I differ from you, Lord Fiddle-faddle; for I think—if I could bring myself to recollect—there were no such ornaments as those you speak of in that place of trash the M‘Farlane Repository.”

“ Then, Lady Aloof, you must be thinking—if you can pardon the presumption of so much liberty—of some other collection. The Hindoo gods stood exactly beneath the antique bracket, behind the filigree railed commode, to the right of the large japan screen, and immediately adjoining that buhl clock and the set of jars underneath.”

“ Lord Fiddle-faddle—*hem!*”

“ Well?” and Lord Fiddle-faddle bowed and trembled, like the Mandarin of his own dear delightful M‘Farlane Repository.

“ O, nothing, nothing,” continued Lady Aloof in the same iced tone of chilling disdain. “ Only I thought, my Lord, when you piqued yourself upon being so very particular, you might have

remarked that I am always exceedingly stupid. —Mr Suttie, weren't you telling me something about the Maringles?—Augustus Maringle's people, I mean." And Lord Fiddle-faddle, thus demolished, fled back into the arms of kind, good-hearted, generous Lord Liberality.

"Dying, as you have just given me to understand."

"*Both* dying?"

"O, no; not quite so accommodating as all that. But don't some of the family dine in that quarter to-day?" for he could guess that her Ladyship did not wish herself to be included amongst the favourers of that setting branch of the shewy, but now somewhat stale Maringles, Mr Augustus.

"Lord Fiddle-faddle," resumed Lady Aloof, who thought the question sufficiently impertinent, and who was more pleased to interrupt and thwart that personage than to relieve Lord Liberality; "I think somebody was telling me—though I cannot recollect who it was—that you were going to marry that little

pulcinello (Lord Fiddle-faddle was still less) of a creature, Mrs Fife?"

"Mrs Fife!!!" squeaked Lord Fiddle-faddle, again abandoning that universal good 'ycleped Liberality. "Mrs Fife? Dear, sure, how odd!"

Lady Aloof simpered in dignified mysteriousness.

"O, now you smile, Lady Aloof. Ah! much is sometimes hid under a smile! But I am happy to say that I shall be able to tell your Ladyship all about it. You see"——

—"Charles James," interrupted Lady Aloof, in rather a stern voice this time, "did I ever see Mrs Fife? Something runs in my head about your aunt Lumberfield's talking to me of a name something like Fife, when we were last amongst the Fifeshire people."

"Monsieur Diabolique, you have read, have you not, M. de Chateaubriand's tales of the Natchez?" said Charles James, who saw that it was not wanted to continue the subject. "Your opinion of that character, if you please."

"M. de C————— va trop loin pour être sincère. Il sent qu'on ne se fie pas à lui; il

écrit pour rattraper sa popularité, et tirer parti des circonstances. Il n'y a pas de mal à laisser à l'écart ces esprits turbulents."

"Mais, Monsieur, ils le méritent."

"Oui, ils le méritent, et par trop. A qui court trop vite, le pied manque souvent." And Monsieur Diabolique fixed his delighted eyes upon poor open-hearted disappointed Campbell Hyndford.

"Don't you think the ground of that vase rather dark, Lord Fiddle-faddle," yawned Lady Aloof, who thought it prudent not to drive things to extremities. "Charles James, pray move the blinds; I think we have got too much light."

"Why, I don't know," replied Lord Fiddle-faddle, whose mind generally rested upon shades, or rather upon shadows, and whose happy genius it was to be constantly straining at gnats; and he pondered the question with great deliberation.

"Why I consider it rather dark myself," returned Lady Aloof, who made the observation merely in order to escape replying to the parting civilities of Sir George Terrorfield, Charles

Suttie, and Campbell Hyndford, who were now, as she suspected, about to take their usual airing on horseback.

“ Why, Lady Aloof, pink is a colour which (to use a metaphorical phrase) does not belong to itself. It takes its hue, like the cameleon, from whatever happens to be placed in conjunction with it. Thus, nobody would ever be able to discover pink in the three large open jars of the smaller cabinet of the M^rFarlane Repository. The reason is obvious”——

This obvious reason, as well as the confab of the Honourable Charles James and Monsieur Diabolique—who, though a little differing in the manner, were pretty much alike in the matter, of every contrivance by which they could hope to vex, perplex, mortify, and irritate the rest of the species with impunity—was interrupted by the arrival of two enemies—Theophilus Madrake, Esquire, and Miss Hyndford.

The lady hated the gentleman, because she suspected that, minus the consideration that was due to her family and to her fortune, he rede her to be weak, vain, cunning, ambitious;

in a word, that he took her to be what she really was. The gentleman detested her in turn, since all her *politesse* could not deceive his penetration; and because, at this particular moment, she plotted the reduction of a family, in whose bosom she had been long nourished, and who had, in spite of every report to the contrary, given her credit for the utmost candour and sincerity of conduct. In fact, the indefatigable spirit of Madrake had just dictated a letter to his friends and favourites, the Countess of Montgomery and her daughter, in which he had earnestly begged them to delay annexing their signatures to several deeds and parchments, which were to make over to Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw a certain arable farm in the neighbourhood of the Hyndshaw estate; in lieu of which Lady Montgomery and her daughter were to receive a like number of still more profitable acres, which were very soon—though this was only known to Miss Hyndford and her agent, and by some inexplicable means to Madrake—to exhibit the still more profitable subject of a law plea;—the validity of Miss Hyndford's title to that portion of

her Hyndshaw estate being about to be looked into by the present representative of the former defrauded possessor. He had also announced his intention of repairing to Champ Fleury himself, in order to establish more decidedly the singular information he had just sent on before.

He was now upon one of his rounds: he had spent a part of the morning, as we have seen, with Mr Monotony; had witnessed the last act of the play that had been performed amongst the Dudds; and was come for a few minutes to view the Aloofs—not that he was any very great favourite with the set, or that they were on their parts of any very beneficial or particular importance to him, but merely that he wanted variety in all its ways, and had not been to wait on them for a very long time before. His meeting with Miss Hyndford, as might have been supposed, was entirely accidental.

“How odd it is, Lady Aloof, that my friend Mr Madrake and I should have met just as we entered your door! I am told Charles Suttie was set down about an hour ago by those dashing four-in-hands.”

“ Foolish fellow,” returned Lady Aloof, bowing *avec réserve* to Madrake; and she condescended to point out to Miss Hyndford the nearest seat. In this situation an extraordinary triumph awaited the last mentioned lady. She was visited by Charles James, Don Pompadosa, who presented his important person with the proper accompaniment of slow measured strides; and by Monsieur Diabolique, who, as he jerked himself forward, continued to apply himself to the good heart and understanding of my Lord Liberality; who, again, had just been eased of Lord Fiddle-faddle; and who, on his part, as he was again become popular, as we have said, with the highest personage in the kingdom, might be almost expected to take once more into his own hands a certain well-known grouse and ptarmigan dominion of much sporting importance in the North; whither Monsieur Diabolique, provided he could attain to the best quarters, was inclined by and bye to retire. By both Diabolique and Mr Aloof, therefore, she perceived Madrake to be slighted. By the first, because he liked nothing that others liked; by the

last, because he suspected him of seeking favour with the Lady Juliana Montgomery, and whom, though he wished her the misfortune of a poor marriage, he did not love to think that any body, least of all Madrake, should flourish by her fall.

Madrake would have gone off with his friend Lord Liberality, to whom he was much attached; but the sight of Miss Hyndford's undisguised triumph caused him to stop. He had just, in the midst of all his hurry, despatched the fatal letter, which was to circumvent and detect all her deep-laid machinations to "take in" Lady Montgomery, by means of the to-be-disputed portion of the Hyndshaw estate; and as some people take pleasure in witnessing the gambols of untameable wild beasts, he staid to contemplate this display of wicked intentions, now triumphing in success, and supported by two such remarkable characters as Don Pompadosa and Monsieur Diabolique.

For a minute or two he staid to his cost, as the parties, congenial only in mischief, talked, looked, and laughed, entirely at his expense. The band, however, thought fit to disperse.

Miss Hyndford threw herself into a lounge; Lady Aloof took to the other end of the sacred sofa; and Don Pompadosa and Monsieur Diabolique went into the embrasure.

Lady Aloof, who had resolved to drop Madrake so soon as she had fairly domiciled Monsieur Diabolique, kept her companion, Miss Hyndford, closely engaged in a trashy under-voiced conversation upon nothings. Monsieur Diabolique, like a pent rat which can no longer derive any assistance from its cunning, went roundly to work to abuse the subject of his annoyance. The abuse, however, was too politic and *recherché* to endanger any body but the abused. He was content to insinuate to Sir George Terrorfield, who loved a quarrel, especially when it was never to end in danger to himself, that though Madrake was certainly *a lion*, he might prove one of considerable strength, and that, like Polycrates, he might suddenly tire of being esteemed an oddity.

“Only a lover of Miss Hyndford’s, I suppose, Diabolique,” said Terrorfield, who thought only of the lady’s estate.

“ And just such another as Mephistophelis proved to Faustus—But stop, he goes.”

“ Well, then, let’s *cut* him going out.”

But Madrake was prepared for this mark of their good intentions, and he anticipated the compliment, by cutting both them and the two *haut ton* Jezebels in a bunch.

“ My dear Miss Hyndford, I was just intending to have called at your house this morning, in order to interest your sympathy in favour of an unfortunate family whom I wish particularly to recommend to your notice.”

“ O, thank you for the compliment, Mr Madrake. But you really make a mistake—I am not at all good ;” and she again prepared to hearken to her friend Lady Aloof.

“ You are too *simple* to be good, I am afraid,” continued Madrake, with a look and accent of voice, that arrested the nick-nack tittle-tattle of both Miss Hyndford and Lady Aloof. “ I shall warn,” he added with increased emphasis, “ both mother and daughter of your simplicity, which I might almost term *profound*.”

At these words, which nobody but herself un-

derstood, Miss Hyndford became ghastly pale. Lady Aloof looked to her son, to request him to ascertain who and what the said mother and daughter (still more terrible yet than Mrs Opie's) were; and the eyes of demoniacal Monsieur Diabolique caught fire.

Never betray, upon any occasion, how much your feelings are interested; for there are some feelings in the extreme degree weak, puerile, and ridiculous. "I am only going to interest Lady Montgomery and her daughter," said Madrake, in a voice now perfectly subdued, "in the wants and sorrows of my destitutes."

"Well, Mr Madrake, I shall think about these people of yours," said Miss Hyndford, in an asthmatic voice: "But haven't you got their case written out upon paper?"

"It is here," replied Madrake, declining to revenge his own quarrel, in the better hope of benefiting the misfortunes of others.

"Why, I don't know about it, Mr Madrake," continued Miss Hyndford, returning the paper, which, by the way, she had never perused; "there are too many of those things going about now-

a-days.” The happy *succedaneum* of the paper had enabled her to recollect herself; to notice the hostile aspect, on her account too, of Monsieur Diabolique; and the supercilious one of Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof; to observe that Madrake really was upon a charitable errand; and to reflect how many depreciating accidents sometimes accrue, merely from persons in danger, like herself, too soon taking fright. “Here is your paper, Mr Madrake; as I said before, there are too many of these things going about now-a-days.”

“Too many suns, too many summers, too many law-suits,” cried Madrake, rising with an air of calm contempt; “too many *swindlers*, Miss Hyndford. The Lady Juliana and her mother are *aware* by this time.”

“Aware!!!” screamed Miss Hyndford.

“Aware!” echoed Lady Aloof.

“Aware of what?” eagerly inquired Don Pompadosa and Monsieur Diabolique.

Unfortunately the door had already closed upon the sole author of their disturbance; and the turkey stair-carpet now shut out even the

sound of his departing steps. The calmest lake, when ruffled, takes yet some time to regain its former aspect of tranquillity. Miss Hyndford sent for her carriage, complained of indisposition, got escorted home by Monsieur Diabolique, and was afterwards honoured with his company in an airing. Don Pompadosa retired into the library; and Lady Aloof gave orders to say, that for the rest of the morning she was engaged.

Madrake, in the mean time, had ascended, or rather descended, into his low-set Cab, which, by a strange coincidence, he had, like Miss Hyndford, appointed to meet him at Lady Aloof's. The sky was now serene and bright, and the sun was high in the heavens. Every body was abroad to take advantage of mild air and a fair day. Equipages of convenience, and equipages of show, made a general turn-out, and every one did his best to lessen the consequence of others, by raising his own. In the midst of such a concourse, the troubles of any one particular individual seem but a "puddle in a storm." And so thought Madrake of the whole band of the Aloofs and their proceedings. In

proof of which he made nineteen calls—nineteen of those once in a season calls, in which, like the old pledging of healths, an interest in the individuals must, at least for the time, be invented.

In some of these visits Madrake was regaled with a few such vapid questions as, “Were you at Lady Grub’s party last night?” or, “Are you going to Mrs Crab’s to-morrow?” There were some, too, who turned out a few anecdotes upon the occasion, backed by a marriage or so, and an occasional rumour or two, which sometimes approached almost to scandal. But the greater number consisted of those who, in spite of all the boasted science, literature, and intelligence of the Athens, repeated silly adventures of themselves.

Nevertheless, out of the nineteen, his card-rack had done the duty of ten; and he was yet inclined for a few more gossipings, when his fate drove him upon the Terriers—a race of people who, whether from revenge or dislike, mortally abhorred the whole *posse comitatus* of the Aloofs, their relations, and dependants.

The Terriers were a set of persons who, in their zeal to ridicule and disoblige the right honourable family of Aloof, incurred the general odium of hating them because fortune had not destined them to play the same fastidious part. Be that as it may, a superior share of ferocity encouraged them to ridicule and defy, if not with more effect, at least with much more noise; and, as they generally attempted to dissect only one member of that august family at a time, they succeeded, like every body whose efforts are regulated by their strength. The present miserable landmark of their united wrath was—Lady Lumberfield.

“ Pray, Eliza, did you get these smelling salts out of the Lumberfield laboratory? I am told every thing is to be had very good there.”

“ All manufactured on the spot are they? Mr Madrake—bless me, aunt, what makes you laugh so—Mr Madrake, will you please to try them?”

“ By no means, I should interfere too much with your pleasure.”

“ O, but the Lumberfield laboratory contains,

amongst other curiosities, above a thousand and sixty ounces, or thereabouts, yet."

"Which curiosity is it you mean, Eliza," demanded the aunt in a tone of voice which was meant only to refer to Lady Lumberfield herself.

"Why, aunt, have you never met with Colonel ——?"

"Colonel ——?" repeated the aunt musing. "O, Colonel —— of the ——. A mere doll, compared with Lady Lumberfield!"

"Bad comparison," here observed a female impudent, who had not as yet spoken. "Bad comparison."

"Almost better than she deserves, I think," tittered the one called Eliza.

"Ay, better; granted. But that makes a flaw in the indictment, child."

"What! is she at last to be tried for her life? I believe it is not the first person who has been poisoned out of a laboratory."

"Not out of the Lumberfield laboratory, surely?"

The lady was silent.

“ Evil-minded woman that, Mr Madrake. I believe it was you who told me at Mrs ——’s the other night, that Colonel —— was decidedly the most graceful man in the regiment, and that you took much pleasure in seeing him get on horseback.”

“ All at variance with Lumberfield Castle this—No grace there, aunt.”

The word *grace* produced an instantaneous and sympathetic simper, which was as immediately set aside for another half-stifled well-bred titter. “ O, pray, Mr Madrake, don’t go.”

“ Mr Madrake thinks the Lumberfield laboratory has done us no good ; and, therefore, that we are all a set of incurables, Mamma.”

“ Such nonsense you people talk. I consider Lady Lumberfield a most exemplary woman,” returned Lady Terrier, pretending to sigh.

“ Very exemplary indeed, Mamma, to be gadding about at her age to every party in town, and incommoding every body with her shape.”

“ Why, I thought,” returned Lady Terrier,

who knew better, “that Lady Lumberfield staid constantly at home?”

“So she did, Mamma, in the hopes of catching a Cook: But we see *that* hope has fled.”

“Well, I never do argue with any body; but certainly General Cook is much behind her in years, if not a head less in height, don’t you think?”

“Why, sister, every body knows Lady Lumberfield to be not a *little* wrong in the head.”

“That is very wrong-headed in you, my dear.”

“Well, that may be; but who ever heard of a person on their death-bed getting up, and going to and giving routs?”

“O, she is not dying, I hope?”

The aunt shook her head. “I only trust, Sophia, that she may not pop off at a card-table, for I am very fond of whist.—Pray, Mr Madrake, did you hear that Lady Aloof had refused to attend, or let her daughter attend, any of the evening promenades?”

“I cannot vouch for the story of the promenades,” cried her niece; “but I know this,

that neither she, nor any of her family, pay any attention whatever to poor Augustus Maringle and his wife."

"Very agreeable people these Maringles," observed Lady Terrier, who loved every body provided they disliked, or began to be disliked by the Aloofs. "I always liked Mrs Maringle very much."

"Advertisement—*hem !*"—

"Eliza, my dear, how *can* you be so rude? put down the paper, I *insist*."

"Directly:—Advertisement. 'To be sold (without reserve) on Friday the 19th, and following days, the celebrated Lumberfield Laboratory, the accomplished proprietress having declined having any farther communication with the same.—Lumberfield Castle, &c. &c.—*Nota bene*. Roup to begin each day precisely at twelve o'clock.—Hint to the public. As Lady Lumberfield intends henceforward to dash and give parties, the sale will be carried on for ready money *only*.'"

'This bright and sportive ghost of a *jeu d'esprit* gained the day. The parties did not even attempt to restrain a laugh, and Madrake got

away without further obstruction or difficulty. This bad edition of the Laughing Chorus did not, however, prevent him from commiserating the condition of the sick and the dying; and, as a last feat, he drew up before the door of Mr Augustus Maringle—a personage, be it known, who had uniformly neglected him since the first day upon which he had, unfortunately for his family and himself, coalesced with the infernal Aloofs.

He was driving off, without having taken the trouble to alight, when he was requested by a message from Mr Maringle to stop. That young gentleman had expressed a wish to see him, and Mr Madrake was consequently obliged to alight.

There seemed to be some appearance of a mistake, however, for he waited in vain for any body to put a period to his detention; and he was about to abdicate the small withdrawing-room into which he had been shewn, without further ceremony or parade, when he received the extraordinary communication that Mr Augustus Maringle requested him, as a particular kindness,

to favour him with his company that day at dinner.

To account so far as we can for this unexpected circumstance:—Mr Augustus Maringle had no sooner caught sight of the tall figure of Madrake, even before that personage had had time to pull up, than he felt an almost unaccountable desire to pitch him against the formal members of the Aloof family.

“ My dear Cecilia,” he observed to his wife, “ *there* is Madrake.”

Mrs Maringle darted a sharp look through the blinds: “ I declare so it is—We will get rid of him presently.”

“ I want him to dine here to-day, Cecilia,” returned Mr Maringle, now speaking with that sort of reckless, yet melancholy simplicity, which sometimes characterizes the conversation of the sick and the dying.

“ My dear Gustus, you know that is so absurd.”

“ Will he not come then?” exclaimed the invalid, forgetful, in his weak and feverish languor and debility, of that *tact*, in the exercise of

which alone he had ever been happy with his wife; and he sighed as if through disappointment.

This deep-drawn sigh, and the helpless supplicating look which accompanied it, softened the lady's heart; and she had just time, as we have seen, to desire that Mr Madrake should be shewn up stairs. Still, however, the solitary humours of the Aloofs, and their fastidious punctilios about being *classed*, and all that sort of thing, occurred to alarm her; and she hoped yet to prevail on him to change his mind.

“ Lady Aloof is such a *very* particular woman, Gustus. And then, the family weren't given to understand, you know, that they were to *meet* Mr Madrake.”

But there is something even in the approaches of death, which inclines us to think less and less of the vain distinctions of our temporal condition. It is not, however, that the mind is occupied by the terrors of apprehension alone; but that the light through which we were wont to

contemplate the spectacle of life begins already to fade and to darken.

Mr Augustus Maringle was already too much sickened by the slackening reins of dissolution, to have any longer much consideration for the whims and caprices of his old tyrants the Aloofs. He could only repeat, therefore, that he *wished* Madrake to return to dinner; and Mrs Maringle, who saw the danger of interfering with his perhaps last wishes, had been accordingly obliged to acquiesce.

CHAPTER VIII.

Those dogmatists who, in whatever religion, have endeavoured to make out the punishments of a future state, have shewn themselves no mean masters in their art. The main ingredient in their delineation is, “to be tormented by devils.”

MANDEVILLE.

“ANY girl who is not used to have a parcel of admirers, would think it the easiest thing in the world to make her choice: but let her judge by what she feels when a dexterous mercer or linen-draper produces pretty thing after pretty thing,—and this is so becoming, and this will wear for ever, as he swears,—but then that’s so fashionable,—the novice stands in a charming perplexity; and doubting, and tossing over half the goods in the shop, it’s ten to one, when it begins to get late, the young lady in a hurry pitches

upon the very ugliest and worst thing that she has seen. Just so it is with me and my lovers.”*

And so it was with Madrake when he accepted of the first and last invitation of Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle. But his hesitation and uncertainty did not, like that of many others, originate in his being at a loss. On the contrary, it was because his own indefatigable dexterity had got too much to disentangle and unravel, that he sought for a few moments refuge in chance. He was busy—though to outward appearance engaged in the mere trivial etiquettes of fashionable life—in planning an interview at Champ Fleury with Lady Montgomery and her daughter, and in attending to some other affairs, the success of which, however, will be sufficiently described in the context.

Mrs Maringle’s fears for this unpremeditated invasion upon the dignity of the terrible Aloofs, proved equally vain and unnecessary. Lady Aloof, who, like the inverted thumb of the Roman assemblies, had so often approved herself

* Modern Belinda.

the instrument of either praise or condemnation, acted, on this occasion, the part of true lady-like indifference. She considered Mr Augustus Maringle as not only dying, but as already dead,—having herself had experience of that accommodating complaint, which, at the same period of life, had, in conducting her own and only brother to his long home, created heiress-ships for both her and her miraculous sister Lady Lumberfield ;—and, as such, she was not to inquire too scrupulously into his present misconduct. The family imitated her example to the letter. In fact, Madrake's own popularity with the Montgomery dynasty had taught them, that, whatever he was, he was not a person whom it was very safe to venture to despise; and so low had now fallen the setting stars of the Maringles, that, when the mighty Aloofs condescended to the one, they thought it no additional hardship to be compelled to condescend to the other. Madrake's own behaviour facilitated every difficulty.

He appeared, for the first time in the presence of others, deeply and painfully absorbed.

Some hidden, yet extraordinary power, seemed to have assumed the mastery of his feelings; and, at times, a sensation like terror seemed to darken his whole countenance. Even Mrs Maringle, little as was her sensibility, or however little she might be concerned—even she observed the secret workings of his agitation; and she remarked to Lady Aloof, “that, whenever his eyes happened to rest themselves upon the now faint visage of her husband, they invariably filled with tears.”

Did the spectacle of the dying, and of death, call forth the vengeance of some dark long-slumbering remorse? Was this man, whose every word brought the actions and intentions of others to the light; whose generosity of sentiment and liberality of thought tended so much to the diffusion of social happiness; was this man, then, an impostor, who perhaps hoped, under the mask of disinterested regard and friendship, to beguile some Lady Juliana, nay, perhaps the Lady Juliana herself, into a surrender of her rights and her affections?

So thought the correct and faultless-thinking

family of Aloof. Mrs Maringle was too old in mischief, and too uncharitable at heart, to believe or suppose that Madrake's distraction could originate altogether in his sympathy for the scarcely to be called sufferings of a man whom he had never esteemed, and by whom, again, he had never been beloved. The only individual, therefore, who thought well of the subject was feeble afflicted Mr Augustus Maringle himself; and he, perhaps, had no longer the right possession of his proper judgment—at least so it was by the same charitable fraternity supposed.

Like the bitter winds that blow athwart the sun in spring time, so fell the feast of Mr Augustus Maringle's last entertainment upon the giddy field of fashionable life. The dinner, though ordered at seven, was not served, through the management of the Aloofs, who kept away, till eight, and at half-past nine the company went off. Mrs Maringle's complaisance towards her dear friends the Aloofs,—and dear they had certainly proved—had failed at every point. The *Dons* of the family were offended, as usual, that

they should be invited to sit in company with a man who had the courage to make acquaintances amongst people not countenanced by the Aloofs; and Madrake, the man in question, was too much engrossed by his own reflections to pay them even the common-place compliment of deference and respect. Even Mr Augustus Maringle, though his condition seemed powerfully to excite his sympathy, was made none the better of his idiosyncrasy.—In effect, Mr Augustus appeared to the whole *posse*, on taking leave, to have suffered very considerable deterioration of health and strength, if not accompanied, as some suspected, with a degree of mental aberration.

The grand conclusion to this day of combustible commodities was a numerously to-be-attended ball, given at her private hotel, by —Lady Lumberfield!

“Lætitia Alicia,” yawned Lady Aloof, as their carriage drove away from Mrs Maringle’s, “was that Mr Madrake the same person we had with us one day when Juliana Montgomery and her mother came to dinner?”

“The same,” answered Miss Lætitia Alicia, talking with *fierté*: “The same. Mrs Maringle insisted upon telling me a long story about some creature they call M‘Pech, and his cutting off this Mr Madrake with a shilling. Dear papa, your cough seems very troublesome, I think.”

“Pray, don’t talk so much, Lætitia Alicia; you make me perfectly nervous,” resumed Lady Aloof, who had never got the better of M‘Pech’s setting himself down in their neighbourhood. “You know we must look in upon sister Lumberfield to-night.—Certainly, I never saw such another odd-behaved man as the person you talk of.”

“The man’s mad; and that explains a great deal, I should suspect.”

“Well, Charles James, that did not occur to me; though I must candidly confess, that I did not really observe him with any degree of attention.”

“As for my part,” said Lord Aloof, “I never observed him till he rose to go away, and that was very shortly after you left. I believe

he struck me at the time as one whom any body would suppose to be in a hurry to commit suicide."

"Very likely," returned Lady Aloof, in a manner that expressed her particular personal desire not to be called again to give evidence in the case. "Very"—— and her Ladyship yawned a second time, and still more broadly than at first.

"He went away very early," observed Charles James, whose attention had been aroused by the extraordinary event of having himself been left: "I dare say a little after eight;" for Madrake had followed the ladies, not to the drawing-room, but to the street.

"Charles James, how *can* you"—exclaimed his mother, exerting herself once more to make the reproach. And the party relapsed into silence, which their arrival at home was not destined for some time to break.

Lady Aloof looked at a time-piece, that lay cased in a crystal shade upon a gold and ebony shelf, and then took her place once more upon the sacred sofa, like another princess of deserted halls, satisfied with rest: Miss Lætitia

Alicia had gone up stairs to dress; and my Lord, and the Honourable Charles James, had retired to his Lordship's closet, not to read, but to find fault with the last series of popular publications.

An hour passed in this manner. At half-past eleven the carriage came again to the door. Lady Aloof, however, staid to assist her daughter in a note of apology to Miss Hyndford, who had so far lost her wits as to send to request that Lady Aloof would pick her up on her way to Lady Lumberfield's. Miss Hyndford's note was written in seeming confusion, and contained the following P. S. in an almost unintelligible scrawl:—

“ I suppose, like me, you have just heard the report. Of course, Madrake must be the man. I have just this moment begun a hasty letter to Lady Juliana Montgomery, mentioning the fact, and my more than suspicions of the author of it. —*Entre nous*, it can be no other, since no other person was interested in it.”

To this life and death epistle, Lady Aloof caused her daughter to reply in plain and sim-

ple terms, "That Lady Aloof regretted extremely that there were already four of the family appointed to go in the coach."—No notice was taken of the P. S. nor the mysterious report to which it appertained.

The same *bruit*, however, that had occasioned Miss Hyndford's panic, must have done pretty general execution, when to it may be, at least for a while, ascribed the eventful circumstance, that there was no dancing at Lady Lumberfield's ball. All were assembled; all were in spirits; all seemed equally happy, pleased, and delighted; and the music continued to play the most inspiring strains. All were dispersed, it seems, up and down, like leaves in wintry weather, in thick, knotty, head-set groupings. All had a question, which all were desirous to put; and all had their own particular answer to expect. That the company were all engaged in canvassing Miss Hyndford's "fact," was true enough; but the circumstance of a connexion between that same fact and a particular member of their own body, formed the real subject of that in-

tense and wondrous speculation which now occupied the set.

Not being willing, however, to be thought so vain as to withhold our eventful intelligence merely for the sake of creating effect, we may as well declare at once, that Lady Lumberfield's ball was the scene appointed for the *dénouement* of the murder of Mr M'Pech. There are some events which prove the secret sympathy that exists among all classes of mankind. A murder, like death, breaks down for the moment all sublunary distinctions, while the mere report of it flies with a celerity which proves to all persons, that the fact of being alive is not, in the abstract, so interesting as that of being killed.

The deed had been perpetrated betwixt the hours of nine and ten at night; and in an hour more the report had not only reached Edinburgh, but had, in making its way over the whole town, actually penetrated to that frozen *sanctorum* of the distant—the mansion of the Viscount Aloof. Nay farther, had, by ten o'clock of the next morning, reached the peaceful sanctuary of the beautiful Champ Fleury.

The most popular account of the transaction, according to Mrs Fife's relation, whom curiosity, backed by Lady Lumberfield's kind solicitations, had enabled to appear abroad on the present occasion, was, "that M'Pech, a short while after he had retired to rest, had been strangled by a tall man, who had his face purposely blackened; and who, after carefully destroying the will, and some other papers of the deceased, had made his escape by means of a rain-water cask—by which, it seems, he had also gained admission into the apartment—scared away at length, it is supposed, by hearing some of the domestics astir in the house."

That Mrs Fife's inquisition into the murder should have stopped short at this point, may not be very readily believed; but Mrs Fife durst not insinuate or declare, except, like the rest, by an occasional mysterious shrug, or a miraculous shake of the head, upon whom the suspicion of the transaction had universally fallen.

The suspicion had, however, fallen upon some one. Every body could understand the advantage to be derived from property and monies to

the amount of one hundred and ten thousand pounds, in a time of supposed great national poverty and distress. This fortune, by the destruction of the will, fell to Madrake,—fell to a man whose means of subsistence were not very properly understood, and might be precarious—who had been the only person visited with the old man's aversion and dislike—and who alone was to be benefited by the destruction or suppression of the deceased's testamentary bequest. The strongest suspicion then fell, and fell at once, upon our wild acquaintance Madrake. A scandal that made the more impression, on account that every one felt themselves more or less connected and entangled in it, and more or less scandalized, from their well-known intercourse with the party so accused.

Should you see, then, the serpent, who hath coil'd
Himself around all that is dear and noble
Of you and yours, lie slumbering in your path,
With but *his* folds between your steps and happiness ;—
When *he* that lives but to tear from you name,
Lands, life itself, lies at your mercy, with
Chance your conductor, midnight for your mantle,

The bare knife in your hand, and earth asleep,
Even to your deadliest foe; and as 'twere
Inviting death, by looking like it, while
His death alone can save you——

Such were the lines which, in every body's ear, were repeated by—Monsieur Diabolique. Miss Hyndford, to whom his indifference, his love of mischief, and particularly his impudence, had recommended him, did still more execution. She explained to a hundred and fifty persons, by means of the Aloofs, who were too proud to speak for themselves, the whole details of the dinner given that day by Mr and Mrs Augustus Maringle; enlarging, as might be expected, on all those points of Madrake's eccentricity of manner and behaviour, which had called forth the animadversion of such truth-judging sticklers as the right honourable persons alluded to; and hinging at last upon the awful circumstance of his mysterious disappearance exactly three quarters of an hour or more previous to the perpetration of the murder.

But if there was a party (and Mrs Fife was certainly amongst the number) who could not be

brought to condemn a being in whom they had hitherto been accustomed to trust ; still it might be asked, what arguments of justification or defence could they oppose to the as yet undisputed fact, that Madrake had been expected at Lady Lumberfield's that very night ; and that, though past midnight, he had not yet arrived ? Mrs Fife's own partiality could not away with this.

“ My dear Miss Leslie,” she observed, in a voice now trembling with agitation, “ you see—you *see* he keeps away.”

“ You do not mean to insinuate, Mrs Fife,” returned Miss Leslie, considerably embarrassed, “ that Mr Madrake”— and Miss Leslie paused to take breath.

“ O, I know they would rather hang him than let him have the hundred thousand pounds. Plums are become so scarce now-a-days, they are really quite to be envied.—My dear, make room for Miss Hyndford.”

“ I think *Mr Madrake* is not to be envied,” said that personage, whom Monsieur Diabolique

was now leading out to dance. “Don’t you think so, Monsieur?”

“Mademoiselle, il peut, comme votre Richard Trois, avoir le précieux talent de dépêcher son monde au ciel.”

“Vous aviez grand tort, Monsieur, de citer si souvent ces vers de Byron,” returned Miss Hyndford, assuming a grave air.

“Vous ne voulez pas valser, dites-vous?” said Monsieur Diabolique, likewise assuming a tone of mock solemnity.

“O, my dear Monsieur Diabolique, I never valse.”

“But ’tis now the valsing time of night.—Come.”

“Une instant.—Voyez!” and Miss Hyndford pointed eye-ways towards the spot where Mrs Fife and her companion Miss Leslie were standing. “You recollect the soirée at Mrs Regular’s, Monsieur?”

“Je vous entends,” replied the Monsieur so addressed. “Mais voyons, puisque, entr’autres choses, Monsieur Madrake nous enlève nos quadrilles, valsons pour nous consoler. Eh!

qu'en dites-vous?" And he ventured to add a little of what is sometimes called 'gentle force' to his entreaty.

"Allons, allons, Monsieur, oui—tout à l'heure. You see Lady Lumberfield busy in forming that large quadrille, don't you?"

"Le quadrille, je présume, que Lady Lumberfield a gardé si long temps."

"In keeping! Well, Monsieur, you are a droll."

"Well, Mademoiselle, we must dance. Do you whisper Terrorfield to receive us for his vis-à-vis, and I shall contrive the rest."

"What! cut out the very first couple that stood up?"

"Comme ils sont bons—It is for their good."

"Monsieur, like some troublesome people, you exercise a little too much espionnage over matters, I suspect."

"Ma chère, dans les grand crises comme celle-ci, c'est le courage et non pas la sensibilité."

"Well, then, I shall try it—Stay, Dieu me garde! what is that?"

"It is, what we in France have got no name

for ; it is—a murderer. In other words, Othello washed white.”

“ Stay, stay, stay, stay, stay, Monsieur Diabolique !” and Miss Hyndford, in whom the morning’s campaign at Lady Aloof’s had excited not the most agreeable feelings, threw her whole weight, which was not small, upon little knick-knackity Monsieur Diabolique.

It was Madrake—no longer agitated, but pale and thoughtful, like one whose mind is burdened by the prescience of some vast or extraordinary event. He appeared unconscious, however, or he pretended to be unconscious, of the *sensation* he created in more bosoms than those of Miss Hyndford and Monsieur Diabolique ; and he took his place beside Miss Leslie, who had kept near the door, from a hope that he might yet appear to set all debatable matters to rights. His altered countenance, however, struck her as something inexplicable, and she felt for the first time a fear at her heart that resembled a suspicion of his honour.

“ He is here !” and she laid her cold moist hand upon the arm of her friend Mrs Fife.

That lady, however, had her eyes fast rivetted upon the fantastic airs of Miss Hyndford, who she could understand, from Monsieur Diabolique's very quaint and sinister looks, was now pretending to faint.

“It is—Mr Madrake,” Miss Leslie attempted to say; and she sat down upon an unoccupied sofa, not a little afraid of falling into the calamity for the honour of which Miss Hyndford appeared so very anxious; leaving Madrake, with all his crimes upon his head, in her place.

“That creature Diabolique has ferreted out something about the murder,” said Mrs Fife, still addressing her supposed companion Miss Leslie.—“Come, child, let us go and inquire.—Stay, I think every body seems to be looking at us.” And Mrs Fife turned slowly round upon Madrake, with a look which seemed to behold the sea dried up, and exchanged for the land. She continued, however, to gaze upon him with the same air of undeviating surprise, till a dimness came by degrees over her eyes; and she fell gently into the arms of the cause of the whole commotion himself—the supposed and

believed identical murderer of the defunct Mr M'Pech !.....

“ O pray, Lady Aloof, don't go. And then to take away Charles James and Miss Aloof ! O, surely Mr Madrake, if he were really guilty, would never venture to come here after murdering M'Pech ?”

“ I am sure I do not feel very much interested whether he did or not. But the truth is, sister, I do not relish the idea of spending the night in a strange hotel—one cannot be very secure in such a place.”

“ Well, then, I think you and Lord Aloof had better go.—You will leave the young people I fancy ?”

“ Couldn't think of such a thing. They might get murdered.”

“ Get murdered ! Why, sister, do you really take Mr Madrake to be the murderer ?”

“ Why, I don't know. Only Miss Hyndford and Monsieur Diabolique”——

“ My dear sister, pray do not found your belief upon their tenets. I suppose, if they were to

take in hand to prove that I had killed the man myself, they would be able to accomplish it."

"Miss Hyndford, for her years, is certainly not steady."

"Steady ! but, sister, only conceive her effrontery in challenging Madrake with the murder before the company ; and laughing all the while, too, in Monsieur Diabolique's face !"

"And Mr Madrake did not attempt to deny the charge, you say ?"

"He certainly changed colour."

"And that, as Monsieur Diabolique avers, is quite enough. I must take my family away."

"Well, you had better, if you think that there is any danger. In fact, I should feel very much annoyed myself if he should happen to be seized in my company."

"Sister," said Lady Aloof quivering, "you should certainly have thought of this before.—O, pray, Miss Hyndford, do send me Charles James and Miss Aloof. You cannot conceive the state of agitation into which my sister Lumberfield has just thrown me."

“Stay, Lady Aloof: You may compose yourself—he is gone.”

“Nevertheless I should like to have my family about me.”

“’Tis very natural. But you must wait, Lady Aloof, till I tell you how I detected him, though Monsieur Diabolique gives all the merit to Mrs Fife.”

“Why, I think the discovery made Monsieur Diabolique very merry,” here interposed Lady Lumberfield.

“Why, it did so, Lady Lumberfield.”—For Monsieur Diabolique was upon all occasions much more anxious that the innocent should be thought guilty, than that the guilty should be considered innocent.—“But for all that, I disagree with him entirely with respect to Mrs Fife.”

“But why did he think of going away?” again essayed Lady Lumberfield.

“Why, the fact was, he saw that I had discovered him to be the murderer. The ante-room, whither Mrs Fife was carried, became shockingly crowded. Charles Suttie was for

taking the votes of the company, and Monsieur was for instituting a trial upon the spot, when Miss Leslie, with whom he wanted to dance, said something in his ear which sent him off like a shot.—Never was there such a clear and decided case of murder made out !”

“ How delighted Miss Hyndford seems with all this,” whispered Lady Aloof, who heard, in the very familiar appellation of *Monsieur*, a formal denial to the pretensions, should they ever happen to be preferred, of the Honourable Charles James Aloof.

Lady Lumberfield gave an important note of assent.

Lady Aloof looked round as if she wanted her daughter.

Her daughter was dancing, Lady Aloof supposed, with Sir George Terrorfield ; and Lady Aloof with great formality resumed her seat.

Her daughter, however, was dancing for the sake of dancing. She was not dancing with Sir George Terrorfield. That gentleman had gathered as much, that the principal part of Miss Lætitia Alicia’s fortune was pride ; and

that all worldly substances were to repose in the hands of the trust-worthy Charles James. He was none of those people who are in love with honours, whether or not they have the where-withal to support them. His Sirship was, accordingly, in pursuit of the more accommodating graces of Miss Hyndford, who, he now thought proper to remark, was scarcely six years older than himself. Miss Aloof, therefore, being in her aunt's house *pro tempore*, had thought it well and good to accept the hand of another Baronet, not just so important, great, or terrific as he of Terrorfield, to be sure—but very well considering.

When the exercise of dancing commences early, it is too little thought of, and often very speedily deserted. When, on the other hand, it is a preposterous time in beginning, it becomes *recherché*, and is accordingly attacked with rage. Madrake (and what every body says must be true) had put a period to the existence of poor old Mr M'Pech; and the fact of the murder once ascertained and believed, Lady Lumberfield's ball, which had hung so long

and so heavy in hand, now bounded forth to sound of feet and noise of drum—[*erratum*, for drum, read horn.]

More terrified at this display, than that her friend Mr Madrake, of fashionable notoriety, should do a deed for the which he must soon be hanged on a gibbet high; and fearful lest her beloved daughter should afterwards have to complain of being entangled in rather too many civilities, Lady Aloof became more impatient than ever to be gone. The nimble figure of Monsieur Diabolique had neared the spot where her Ladyship was moored, merely to sheer off on a cruize of observation on the more stormy body of Sir George Terrorfield, whom Miss Hyndford, though she had no objections to his attentions, was just preparing to reject; for that lady had the sagacity to suspect, that if Sir George was now in love, it was rather odd that he should never have been enslaved before. If this was the first time he had thought of marrying, she was not inclined to suit his convenience: had he been unsuccessful in some other quarter, it was not for her to play

a second fiddle, who had been more often accustomed to sound a first. Besides, Miss Hyndford's ambition, in spite of age, poverty of accomplishments, nay, even in spite of quickly approaching ugliness, knew no earthly bounds. She was ambitious by nature, and the advantages of birth and of fortune, which she certainly possessed, served to encourage and confirm her original prepossessions. She wished to become a Baroness, Marchioness, or Duchess, amongst the *noblesse* of the richer class. She was half-inclined, or had been half-inclined, for the young and splendid Duke of ———. She had some thoughts of becoming Countess Diabolique. There was still another match in reserve in the mighty person of the illustrious Don Pompadosa, alias the Honourable Charles James Ferdinand Frederick Aloof. But this was a match which neither parties seemed very willing to light, or it was, more probably, a match prone to be extinguished, it might be, amongst the brighter fires so frequently kindled up by the more combustible *materiel* of Monsieur Diabolique.——

To return to bodies of a cooler temperament. —Every person but my Lord had quitted the vicinity of Lady Aloof. The members of assembly, by having their good spirits so long repressed, were now involved in all the giddy fantasies of fashionable frolic; and, in the midst of that assembly, the Honourable Miss Lætitia Alicia was lost. The Honourable Charles James, affecting, we presume, to imitate his eternal namesake, was talking—but talking nonsense.

In search, then, of these two forward stars, the Viscount and Viscountess Aloof now stumbled upon a group of well-bred fools, stationed somewhere about the nether settlements of the ball-room, and who seemed to have placed their hearts, as well as their eyes this time, upon the indisputable figure of Lord Fiddle-faddle. Unable to digest the terrible circumstance of the murder, were they now assembled to dictate, with many lamentations, the fate of the murderer? No; a mightier subject yet remained to be canvassed and discussed—of much more vital importance, too, as the reader shall be told, to the fashionable community now on the *qui vive*.

Lord Fiddle-faddle, with the effort of another Sampson, or rather Ajax, had purchased——tell it not in Gath——had at last purchased, O ye august brothers of the Antiquarian Society ! the M'Farlane Repository. That vast, mighty, and multiplied collection of all that is most worthy to one sect, and most worthless to another, was now henceforward and for ever confided to the industrious care of Lord Fiddle-faddle !

Lord Fiddle-faddle was describing with infinite anxiety and labour the immense proportions of two Palmyra palms, hid for half a century, he supposes, behind a set of japan shelves, containing, if not of the vegetable, we presume at least some equally wonderful specimens of the mineral world. He was listened to by some who wished to pass themselves off for connoisseurs in articles of vertu and bijouterie ; and by others, who, for the sake of merely pronouncing their opinion, were willing to subjugate themselves to every species of annoyance and uneasiness. These last were the persons of whom Lord and Lady Aloof were in quest.

They despised the fusty dust-besmeared materials of the M'Farlane Repository; but they still more despised to mingle happily with the rest of their fellow-creatures. The set, then, who proved themselves attentive to the very explicit explications of Lord Fiddle-faddle, were those cat-witted self-sufficientists, who would rather pass sentence on the shape of the *toupet* of a Hindoo god, than move their little finger to save a single being from suffering or destruction. They were the people, nevertheless, the best fitted to beguile the time, till Providence should have restored to their parents' arms the two wandering shoots of the Aloofs; and smiles on both sides told the parties well met.

“ Well, what think you of this necklace, my Lord?” said a lady of the certain age, taking advantage of Lord Fiddle-faddle's pause—who had merely stopped to take breath. “ It is composed, I assure you, of pieces of lava taken from the top of Mount Vesuvius.”

Lord Fiddle-faddle, with a face which we can only compare to that of a tipsy man when he attempts to snuff a candle, put forth his bewilder-

ed eyes, as if some of the famous lava itself had just been unexpectedly deposited at his feet.

“ Could you possibly take off your necklace, Ma’am? Perhaps I am asking too much—but really, Ma’am, the occasion is so very curious.”

“ O, no trouble I assure you, my Lord,” cried Miss Beresford, nimbly disrobing herself of her volcanic ornaments. “ No trouble in the world.—Smell it.”

Lord Fiddle-faddle did as he was bid, and dwelt for a few minutes in ecstasies over a sort of effluvia, something like that which *has* been produced by the unintended escape of gas.

“ I have no other specimens of it,” continued the lady, who probably began to think that his Lordship’s newly awakened devotion for the Mount might carry him, perhaps, a little too far in his worship,—in other words, commit a crime, for which he might be in danger of suffering from a much stronger fire.

“ Nothing but the bracelets, I believe, Anna-bella,” observed another lady, who made the observation she could not very well tell for what.

“ Ah, bracelets!” screamed the delighted

Lord Fiddle-faddle, instinctively putting forth his other hand. “ I declare I never felt myself so much interested in my life !” and he held the discarded necklace in a manner—no matter how.

“ These are rather larger than the others, my Lord,” returned Miss Annabella, whose vanity seemed for a moment to get the better of her interest. “ I took them from the necklace, because bracelets, and armlets, and all these sorts of things, are now worn so very broad.”

“ Just so,” muttered Lord Fiddle-faddle, who sighed for just one little bit of bead, to grace the last arrived package of the M‘Farlane Repository from Fife-hall.

“ I will shew you,” continued the lady, whose returning prudence now suggested the excuse for the more speedy restoration of her goods, “ the way in which I managed, if your Lordship will be so kind as return me the necklace.”

“ The necklace !” exclaimed Lord Fiddle-faddle, in manifest surprise. “ Dear me, what has become of the necklace ? O, now I perceive

the joke," he added, recovering himself; "you have got it, Ma'am, around your own fair neck."

We candidly confess that we never could relish the fun, as some people term it, of mysteriously withholding and detaining other people's rings, jewels, watches, trinkets, snuff-boxes, &c. &c. &c. It is at the best a stale joke, which has many chances of doing ill, and very few of doing good. And so thought, as we shall hear, the lady in question.

"My Lord," she said, in a tone which somewhat resembled the sound of muttering thunder in the distance, "I *insist* upon my necklace just now, if you please."

Lord Fiddle-faddle could only persist in affirming, that he really had not the necklace in his possession, and that he even knew not what had become of it.

The lady began to breathe rather loud on hearing this declaration.

"I swear—I *protest*, Madam, I know not what has become of your most valuable necklace."

“ Too valuable in some people’s eyes, I suppose, my Lord,” retorted the fair. “ But perhaps some of the rest may have got it?” she added, interrupting herself.

The rest declared off, and contrived in less than a second to get themselves removed at least two paces further away from the scene of contention. Lord and Lady Aloof, as they were at all times *above* suspicion, seemed now at least to be beyond it. Lord Fiddle-faddle grew pale, and the lady became red. The lady durst not accuse the Right Honourable Lord Fiddle-faddle, with all his predilection in favour of bijoux and nick-nacks, of becoming, to use a coarse though familiar term—a thief. Lord Fiddle-faddle knew neither how to act, speak, look, or think. With all his weakness and absurdities, his Lordship, we are happy to state, was innocent of the theft. This second edition of the famous necklace of the unfortunate Maria Antoinette had just disappeared under the infernal auspices of Monsieur Diabolique.

“ For the true reason was, the elf
Could pick their pockets by himself;

And that he did—but, by the bye,
'Tis only known to you and I."

Monsieur Diabolique was one of those active malignants, who are always most on the alert at those times when other people are inclined to relax. *Par exemple*, Mr Diabolique's most industrious moments were generally those which precede or follow the grand transaction of a dance; or the sitting down to, or rising from table. His genius could be calm in the midst of a hurry, and could hurry in the midst of a calm. His deep set eye could at once comprehend, observe, and detect, without his appearing to confer even a glance upon the chosen objects of his activity. He could stare an assembly out of countenance in the midst of a waltz; and he triumphed in an accident, much in the same manner as a pickpocket who hopes to find his advantage in a crowd. He had detected something extraordinary in the gestures of the group, while promenading *en train* at the conclusion of the dance; and stealing suddenly upon them at the very moment when their attentions were so profoundly turned upon the bracelet, he had

managed to catch the necklace of present as much as of past combustibles, just as it dropped from off the yielding claws of Lord Fiddle-faddle's handless glove; the shrivelled owner of which, like the dog and the shadow, had gone in search of more spoil, without taking any pains to secure what it already possessed. His next exploit was to deposit the said necklace, cause of feud, safe in his Lordship's own hat, which, laying harmlessly upon a chaise-longue, he passed in his retreat.

Having accomplished all this, Monsieur Diabolique now made his approach in company with Miss Hyndford, for whose shawl he had just been despatched to quite an opposite quarter of the room or rooms; and which, by the way, he had also the dexterity, without detaining his companion beyond the expected time, to produce.

He found the lady forced to be resigned, and Lord Fiddle-faddle, whom she had already indirectly accused of the act, forced to pocket the affront; the report of which had now eclated "far and wide."

Miss Hyndford with *empressement*, Monsieur Diabolique with indifference, begged to know what all the clamour meant.

Those on the spot, and who might have been supposed able to make a report, knew nothing of the matter; those at a distance were noising it abroad. It overtook Monsieur Diabolique and Miss Hyndford in some shape; and at that moment came to their help that second son of mischief, Charles Suttie, who, after Monsieur Diabolique, was by far the greatest miracle of diablerie extant.

“Miss Beresford robbed!!!” cried Monsieur Diabolique, pretending for the first time to understand the true merits of the case.

Miss Hyndford put her hand to her head, ears, and neck.

“Do you fancy yourself robbed too, Miss Hyndford?”

“I am sure I can’t tell, Mr Suttie; you know that there has been robbery and murder committed but very lately.”

“Robbery and murder!” groaned Charles Suttie.

“ Robbery and murder !” re-echoed Monsieur Diabolique ; “ both in one night ! and both the robbers and the murderers to be seen together in the same house !!! ”

“ Chut ! chut ! chut ! chut ! *chut !* Monsieur !” cried Miss Hyndford, whom this speech, declared aloud, particularly charmed and delighted ; “ Plus bas, pour l’amour de Dieu ! ”

“ Pour l’amour de Dieu ! Non, mais en justice laissez moi faire connaître Lord Fiddle-Faddle.”

“ Ce sera donc votre tour après, Monsieur.”

“ Je crois pouvoir répondre à cette charge.”

“ Well then, Monsieur, I must certainly consult with Sir George Terrorfield. But, dear me, how dismal they all look !” In effect, this invidious salute of the *trio* had had the effect of detaining the principal performers on the spot : Lord Fiddle-faddle, because he felt unwilling to excite any further suspicions of guilt ; Miss Beresford, from a vague hope that something might yet occur to restore her her necklace.—To soften a little the awkwardness of the scene, however, Miss Beresford turned in her despair to

admire Miss Hyndford's newest patterned bead bracelet; and which, with a heart far removed from the subject, she now pretended to admire, in preference to the more popular pine-apple raised-work now in fashion; while Lord Fiddle-faddle began to praise the Roman pearl chains of some of his now disconcerted hearers; disguising the bitter misery of his situation under a copious disquisition concerning the respective virtues of the alabaster clay, in comparison with the equally useful compositos of paste and pearl.

Much as Monsieur Diabolique and his friends enjoyed the *nausea* of this scene, it became necessary that they should break away.

In so doing, Monsieur Diabolique contrived a second trick, which would have done honour to the most accomplished adventures of another Laura and her companion Don Raphael. Lady Lumberfield herself was the *succedaneum* which Monsieur Diabolique chose to employ, in the mean time, for the better success of his intentions. Her Ladyship, after having banqueted her friends, the Aloofs, by themselves—who, with the exception of Don Pompadosa, had at

length congregated and gone away—was now come to recommend to the group in question, as she had done to several others on her way, that they should descend to supper—which by some mischance or other had been forgot to be announced—before the throng of dancers should preclude all ordinary means of descent.

“For any sake, my dear Lady Lumberfield, take away these dancers first, and so afford us a little more room for the recovery of Miss Beresford’s necklace.”

This speech Monsieur Diabolique was expert enough to address to vast Lady Lumberfield, before she had time to get sufficiently near to impose her commands in person upon the party so to be disposed of.

“Lost her necklace, has she?” exclaimed Lady Lumberfield, whom a feeling of delicacy, as well as of good-breeding amongst her company, had hitherto defrauded of the scandal; “why, I must inquire about this.”

“O, for mercy’s sake! don’t. Some rather awkward suspicions, I assure you, have just gone forth against poor Lord Fiddle-faddle; and we

are all very anxious to grant him the opportunity, *if* innocent, of putting every thing once more in its place."

"Are you in earnest, Monsieur Diabolique?" said Lady Lumberfield, talking quietly.

"Sérieusement, Madame, si vous voulez nous épargner un grand esclandre"—— Monsieur Diabolique paused.

"Well, Monsieur?"

"—— Emmenez les danseurs."

Lady Lumberfield, though with some reluctance, communicated her, or rather his wishes to the gay children of Terpsichore, whom Monsieur Diabolique, for various reasons, felt so very anxious to disperse and to interrupt. She was obeyed by the parties in the quadrille not dancing, and these were as immediately followed by the rest; a proof that dancing forms one of those peculiar sort of *divertimentos*, the chief virtue of which consists in being looked at.

"And would you really all prefer being left in the lurch, good people?" cried Monsieur Diabolique, briskly reapproaching the group, whose attention he now chose to direct to the

departing figures of the dancers. “Miss Hyndford, will you be so kind as conduct Miss Beresford; for we know—*la chose est sans remède*.—Monsieur Soottie, will you be so kind as assist me to undertake the rest?”

The idea of supping proved to all a most seasonable relief; and to none more than to Lord Fiddle-faddle and Miss Beresford. Despising the favourite pastime of a determined beau, however, Lord Fiddle-faddle was preparing to commence his march down stairs without his hat.

“My Lord,” Diabolique now took an opportunity of whispering, “if I durst advise you, it would be, not to lose sight of your hat. I have heard of some rather awkward changes in that department in this quarter; and after the necklace, you know, nothing less need be expected.”

Lord Fiddle-faddle, who piqued himself upon the particular shape and texture of his hat, made a movement to secure the one in question; and happy at Monsieur Diabolique’s implied belief of his innocence, was inclined to put himself still more entirely under his guidance.

“ But here his judgment was too civil,
For Ithacus would cheat the devil.”

“ Stay, my Lord, you mustn’t attempt to lead the ladies ; a way will be opened for them when it cannot be for us. Let us *enfilé*, if you please, just quietly behind their backs.”

Lord Fiddle-faddle generously obeyed this wicked suggestion of the wily Diabolique, and suffered, not only his own immediate party, but the better half of a quadrille of sixty to pass him on the landing-place. He was permitted, however, to lead Mr Charles Suttie, Miss Hyndford, and her *inamorata*, Monsieur Diabolique.

Lady Lumberfield, from a wise fear lest something might happen to annoy or perplex her fastidious kinsfolk the redoubtable Aloofs, had passed an interdict against gongs, supper-bells, trumpets, and such like instruments of clamour and alarm. To make up for this deficiency, there was now heard upon the stair-case the Babel of at least a hundred tongues, which the crush and crowd had now brought opportunely into play. In fact, there was occasion for talk. Monsieur Dia-

bolique had contrived, with the assistance of his emissary Charles Suttie, that the whole assembly should meet at once upon a given point; and the squeeze was accordingly enormous. The crowd became locked. A multitude within, and a multitude without, prevented the door of the banqueting-room from getting opened. There was a sea of people in the salons below, and another sea in the salons above. The inhabitants of the stair-case hung in mid air between.


In this situation, the attention of the whole was directed towards Lord Fiddle-faddle, who, in a most inconvenient position, had had the misfortune to fall into rather a quarrelsome dispute with Monsieur Diabolique.

The feud was occasioned, to all outward appearance, by Lord Fiddle-faddle's hat; for his Lordship never sported a chapeau bras. Lord Fiddle-faddle's hat incommoded the ladies in front, when held below; it offended Miss Hyndford's eyes, when kept aloft. Lord Fiddle-faddle must therefore throw his hat, without further ceremony or delay, over the rails of the balus-

trade. Lord Fiddle-faddle made every possible opposition to this catastrophe, but the general feeling of the mob—with whom he had evidently lost ground ever since the affair of the necklace—seemed to be,—for an idle mob is always a very mischievous one,—that the hat must *go it*.

As Monsieur Diabolique, however, insisted, Lord Fiddle-faddle resisted; till the contest becoming warm, Monsieur Diabolique suddenly put an end to the quarrel, by tossing up the hat and its contents to the ceiling, from which, again, the long lost embers of Mount Vesuvius now descended in a shower, if not quite so sparkling, at least almost as terrific and surprising;—for Monsieur Diabolique, when he hooked Miss Beresford's necklace to the lining of my Lord Fiddle-faddle's hat, had likewise contrived to snap the thread on which the beads themselves were to be *pro tempore* as well as *pro bono publico* suspended.

The company screamed in concert, but none so loud as Miss Beresford, when she saw her much lamented necklace disappear for ever, like melting snow, amongst the heads, the feet, and



especially the faces of the crowd. In fact, no part or portion of that famous necklace was ever more seen. Some persons, Lord Fiddle-faddle amongst the rest, were covetous enough to pick up, for their own benefit perhaps, one single bead. A few were remorselessly swept aside next day by thoughtless house-maids. Don Pompadosa kept possession of a bunch which still adhered to the fag end of the string, because it had fallen upon himself. Several were crushed and broken by persons whom they had unceremoniously popped on the nose and head; the rest were *accidentally* trampled upon by Monsieur Diabolique.

The fun which this display of silent fire-work necessarily excited, was fomented by a fictitious dispute concerning the evidence which the company had now certainly received of Lord Fiddle-faddle's guilt; while that nobleman, and his wondering hearers, were happy to be able, if not to explain, at least to excuse the mistake. In the end, every body was rendered happy by the substantialities of Lady Lumberfield's supper, as well as by the now acknowledged

innocence of Lord Fiddle-faddle—with the exception of Miss Beresford, Don Pompadosa, and Monsieur Diabolique. The first, because she thought with Franklin, that whatever might be the merits of Lady Lumberfield's fête, she had paid "too dear for her whistle." Don Pompadosa was dissatisfied that so much should have been transacted without the patronage and consent of the noble but austere family of the Aloofs. Monsieur Diabolique was displeased, because he had failed in the long run in attaching to good harmless Lord Fiddle-faddle the guilt of robbery. He had soon, however, a more (at least to him) important occasion for disquiet. He observed, before the close of Lady Lumberfield's *soirée*, that Miss Hyndford's inconstant eyes had veered round towards Sir George Terrorfield, whom that lady was, in the mean time, attempting to release from the chains of a beautiful girl, by whom, for that night only however, he had suffered himself to be enthralled.

Sir George Terrorfield, on the other hand, independent of the loss of Miss Hyndford and

her estates—for that lady had at length formally declined his suit—had tired at any rate of his confederacy (in which he had always come off with the worst) with the said Monsieur Diabolique, whom he now openly and avowedly resolved to put to death. He had cause, however, to reflect on the impolicy as well as danger of this scheme, on receiving intelligence that Monsieur Diabolique had already begun to despatch circulars for the assembling of his *caste* friends to witness his intended duel with Sir George Terrorfield, whose immense body, which he was sure to bring down, was likely to prove game to his company of the very best species.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Stand back, and let me look on thee again !
My Ulric !—my beloved !—can it be—
After twelve years ?”

Werner, a Tragedy.

AWAY from this scene of broils, contests, robberies, and murder, the scene now opens on the beautiful retirement of Champ Fleury. That charming tranquillity itself was about to be disturbed by a history of the same awful events, if not by the presence of some of the chief actors in those terrible exploits themselves.

Madrake's letter, bearing the words, “ In haste,” had been delivered at Champ Fleury that night. Miss Hyndford's express travelling at speed, had arrived a few hours after it. The first all but accused Miss Hyndford of being a

swindler; the second more openly denounced Madrake as a murderer.

Lady Montgomery and her daughter had had occasion to remark the correctness of Madrake's information upon all subjects; it was likely, therefore, that in a matter of so much importance as that to which he referred, he should study to be still more particularly correct. Miss Hyndford's intelligence, at least upon this occasion, bore no less the stamp of sincerity, if not of truth.

For some time, Lady Juliana and her mother could only turn from the one letter to the other, in the silent terror of astonishment. By degrees, however, they gained strength to comment upon the wonders contained in both. Miss Hyndford, it occurred to them, though affectionately devoted to them for the last few years, had no great reputation for either generosity or benevolence. Her agents, whoever they were, might have suggested the advantage to be derived from exchanging the frail limb of the Hyndshaw estate for one of a firmer tenure; and Miss Hyndford's well known ambition might possibly have induced her to consent to the

proposal. With regard to Madrake, he had ever appeared to them, a frank, open, sincere, and talented character;—still and on there was even over *his* bright head a cloud, which sometimes lessened, if it did not obscure, the radiance beneath. The scarcity or obscurity of his family friends and connexions, and the singular position in which he stood with respect to the vast possessions of the defunct M'Pech, were circumstances not unknown to them. These same insinuations had originated with the illustrious Aloofs; and they now occurred, in spite of their benevolence, to excite in their minds a sort of wandering suspicion of his guilt.

Agitated by these terrible impressions, the Lady Juliana and her mother arose at an early hour from their troubled slumbers, to confer once more upon the strange intelligence contained in the despatches of the preceding night.

They were seated with their arms half resting upon a toilet-table decorated with flowers, and which stood recessed in the embrasure of a window, the Venetian blinds of which were partly drawn up for the better admission

of the morning light, when they espied the alleged murderer of M'Pech himself wandering alone upon the grounds beneath.

Lady Juliana changed colour, and seemed to lose with it all further power of respiration.

“Juliana, you needn't be alarmed,” said her mother, who had observed her emotion; “there is too much independence, too much defiance, in this man's air and look, to have been guilty, whatever the temptation, of so great a crime as murder. He comes, therefore, to consult us upon Miss Hyndford's affair, and we must see him as soon as possible. His activity, however, I must confess to have been rather premature—considering all things;” she added, softly.

And the Countess and her daughter descended to the pleasure-gardens below.

The object of pursuit had gone to rest himself in one of those verandoed conservatories, where the better productions of the earth are made to flourish at leisure, and to flourish in strength. Into this recess of the consecrated and the beautiful, the Countess and her daughter at length followed. They approached the

clustered festoons of geranium flowers and other waving exotics, which half-shaded the person of him of whom they were in search. The air of reckless heedless independence was no more; neither could they remark any traces of that disguised horror and remorse, which had so quickly affected the vacillating nerves of Miss Hyndford, and the more calculating ones of the Aloofs; but the eye was feverish and unsettled, as if the spirit by which it was animated was in pain; and the Countess shrunk back into her former indescribable sensations of doubt, suspicion, and uncertainty.

She had, however, in a physical sense, advanced too far to retreat unperceived.

“ I received your letter, my dear Mr Madrake—concerning that affair of Miss Hyndford’s,” she said with an effort.

“ Abroad so early, Lady Montgomery !” answered her guest, awakening as it were out of a profound reverie: “ And you, Lady Juliana,” he added, in a voice that trembled with some secret and powerful agitation, “ I did not expect—— But Miss Hyndford’s affair was not

the principal occasion of my coming to disturb, thus early, the tranquillity of those I so much love:—I have got that to communicate, which will have no small influence upon my future happiness, if not upon my future fate.”

Lady Montgomery felt herself grow cold, and Lady Juliana fell back behind her mother, from a vague feeling that she at that moment needed protection.

“ You need not feel alarmed, Lady Montgomery; you will soon know *all*.”

“ Then the person Miss Hyndford mentioned in her letter *has been*”——murdered ! the Countess would have said.

“ And has she then been so busy in this quarter, too, Lady Montgomery ? Her activity reproaches me, it would appear, for the little diligence I now discover in her behalf. Listen to me, then;”——and he unravelled and exposed that quirky combination of Miss Hyndford and her men of business, to substitute, in lieu of one of the finest portions of the Montgomery estates, that rugged tract, which was now on the eve of becoming still further rugged, if not altogether

lost, of the Hyndshaw territory ;—which was, in simple terms, to secure Miss Hyndford, and to fasten upon Lady Montgomery and her heirs the superlative benefits of a law-suit, from which nothing was to be gained, and by which every thing might be lost.

Again, Madrake's love of truth, his integrity, his just indignation towards persons who, to make themselves right, were little scrupulous of making every body wrong, and his frequently implied resignation to the behests of fortune, such as they were, prevailed with the Countess ; and she began by degrees to feel herself a little more comfortable in his presence. He had neither, however, touched upon the murder, or upon the reports that were spread to implicate him in that transaction. She felt obliged to him, nevertheless, for the interest he seemed to take in her affairs ; and, in particular, for the service he had just done her daughter and herself, in exposing the machinations of Miss Hyndford and her emissaries.

“ I feel very grateful to you, my dear Mr Madrake,” she said ; as they retraced their steps

to the chateau, to which they had been already summoned to return to breakfast; “and would be happy to know in what manner I could most serve or oblige you.”

“Once more, then, my dear Lady Montgomery, I would return with the fair Juliana to that sweet retreat which we so lately explored together.”

“Mr Madrake,”—said the Countess; and the murder, and all its consequences, came again to disturb and distract her resolution.

“Has Miss Hyndford, then, proved herself capable of telling the truth, Lady Montgomery?”

“I was not thinking of *her*, Mr Madrake;” and she sighed.

“You were thinking, however, of Mr M’Pech’s murder, and the colour Miss Hyndford has given to that transaction, were you not?”

Lady Montgomery was silent.

“It is as I suspected.—Have you any objections, Lady Juliana, that we should again explore that beautiful solitude which once before we so cheerfully traversed; for it is there that I would confide the secret by which my life is

now held as if by a thread." And he pointed to the woods, the undulating outlines of which were confounded in the distant perspective beyond.

"I have no objections, Mr Madrake," replied Lady Juliana; and she looked towards her mother, as if to ascertain whether or not she had done right in testifying so explicitly her unbiassed conviction of his innocence.

Her mother answered by another look, in which she applauded the nobleness of her determination. "And am I not to be permitted to accompany you, Mr Madrake?" she added timorously—the possible necessities of a desperate man, anxious to secure himself at any price, occurring at the instant to her thoughts.

"Miss Hyndford was then, perhaps, in the right." And he reseated himself with an air of calm, though unrepressed contempt.

"My dear Mr Madrake——Juliana," continued the Countess, "you must endeavour to prevail with Mr Madrake to keep by his original intention."

"My dear Lady Montgomery, Lady Juli-

ana's own consent is enough—let us proceed. “Much,” he added, with increased emotion, “much may be revealed, before we again return to this spot!”

“Lady Juliana,” he resumed, when they had advanced a considerable way on their route towards the S——, with its banks so gracefully steepened by the waving boughs of the overhanging woods, “though I declined to express myself more distinctly to your mother, I nevertheless feel it necessary—and that for the more easy accommodation of our discourse—to inform you, that there is no truth whatever in Miss Hyndford's version of the murder. The facts connected with that shocking event will forthwith be laid before the world at large; and it will then be seen how much, and how far, I either interested myself in his death, or in the wealth which public report, I believe, has already assigned to my use. What I have got to confide to you has no relation to that catastrophe; though it may be the means of revealing another, perhaps not less terrible, calamity.”

“But enough of this, Lady Juliana,” he ex-

claimed, as they once more re-entered the bower or summer-house to which they had now drawn near. “ Let us rather recall our thoughts to the first early days of childhood and youth ; to the time when the heart knew not even the necessity of prudence. Let us forget the avaricious distortion of a countenance like that of the unfortunate M’Pech ; or the not less disgusting leer of cunning and presumption which deforms and degrades the features of Miss Hyndford ; and return once more to the smile of animated innocence—to that serenity and loveliness which adorns even the plainest face, when undisturbed by any one particular fault or passion—to that hope, which marks our reception of the young on their first entrée into the world ; and which is occasioned less by consideration for their new character, than by admiration for that simplicity and goodness by which they seem to be as yet invested !

“ You have felt, like me, the influence of that celestial charm, familiar only to the countenance of youth—that pristine beauty, which depends on no particular feature for effect ; and which

seems even independent of the advantages of external appearances. Like "the smile of angels, when an infant sleeps," it wears a radiance which belongs but to itself. That radiance is the first fond emotion of joy and hope;—that light, which reveals to the soul, not yet bereaved of its innocence, those bright anticipations of happiness, which, as they are never destined to blossom here, are fitted only for a purer and more exalted element;—that inborn felicity, which reveals to us for a moment the existence of an eternal happiness, though that happiness can be seen but in perspective; which teaches us to be religious without instruction; and to perceive the ray of light which an omnipotent Power has *then* lent, to enlighten our still helpless and feeble existence.

"My imagination recalls to mind the spectacle of an only son, born to inherit just such another domain as Champ Fleury; in whose good and generous qualities, a proud father sees reflected back again the features of his own former felicity. It follows him through all that variety of innocent pleasures, which a situation

of dignity and magnificence in the country generally affords. It beholds him broke away from those hours of meditation and study, which are so necessary for the true enjoyment of pleasure. It contemplates him, at the close of noon, abroad amidst the clear effulgence of the summer sky, and with a heart now satisfied and happy. It contemplates that bright smile of animated intelligence, still brighter in the hour of freedom; or follows him to the shady banks of some lone stream, whose waters, cool and pellucid like this, receive his young athletic form upon its bosom. It sees him dare its foaming torrents with his youthful strength, and, ferrying over some loved companion in the tiny skiff which his own industry has made, give to the woods and echoing groves the careless carol of a heart content.

“ My warming fancy next beholds him surrounded by his own domestic animals, for whose comfort he exerts the purest feelings of kindness and benevolence; or, mounted on his favourite steed, wing the plains as a bird, till, like a thirsty hunter tired of speed, he stretches him-

self at length upon his downy bed, and, blest with dreamless sleep, wakes glad and happy with the morning sun—himself the child of promise and of hope.

“ Our waking dreams are fatal : How I dreamt
Of things impossible ! (could sleep do more ?)
Of joys perpetual in perpetual change !
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave !
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life ! ”

This being, so full of perfection, so rich in early promise, had a sister, and her name was—
Juliana ! * * * * *

“ You weep, Lady Juliana ! ”

“ Forgive my tears, Mr Madrake ; but you have, perhaps, unintentionally given me back the picture of that brother whom I still so deeply regret. A few tears may be pardoned when consecrated to the memory of one who, amiable and accomplished in himself, exerted himself so much to promote the happiness of others.”

“ There, however, Lady Juliana, my likeness ends. The subject of my soliloquy is *not* dead. Listen again to me, and you will be told the

benefits that are so often derived from experience. Listen, and you shall learn the fate of a being who took his after-lessons of knowledge from mankind at large.

“That enthusiasm of hope, those sentiments of love, of honour, of enthusiasm, which gave such a charm to the first bright years of life, awakened confidence. That confidence pointed onwards towards the unfathomable ocean of experience, and there the bark was lost.

“I am a blasted branch—the tremendous gale of public disgrace has passed over all the buds of my promise, and I am nothing !”

“Where were now those fertile vallies, ever beautiful and verdant?—sunk into the haunts of riot, vice, and intemperance. Where were those looks, so noble, so intelligent?—overcast with fear, and shrouded in grief. Where those innocent thoughts, the first gifts of youth?—torn, tortured, and defiled ! Where the fond cherished pride of a parent’s heart?—broken ; and the sire that doated, humbled and prostrated to the dust. Where those days, short with the weight of pleasure?—laden with discontent, sor-

rows, and anxieties ! Those nights of rest, sweetened by the internal consciousness of good ? —darkened by the clouds of eternal, interminable remorse ! Where those honours, which the destiny of ages had preserved for one never destined to inherit them ?—crushed and dishonoured ! Where that name, the nobility of which was to secure respect and excite veneration ?—exchanged for one more false, though perhaps more true ; and condemned, it might be, to eternal extinction. Where those tender and social affections, so congenial to the fond dispositions of youth ?—thrown back upon themselves, and exiled like the object in whose untainted breast they had once so piously united.

“ There was, however, still one being left, over whose tender innocence his once spotless memory loved to watch ; whose confiding, unsuspecting heart had been beguiled of the truth, and taught to mourn his loss as one who was already numbered with the dead. He remembered her, far away, in that lone grot which he had formed for the protection of her tender

years; and where, likewise, released from her task, she had been wont to await his approach.

“ His soul, degraded as it was, wept at the recollection of this image, and he resolved, like another St Leon, to visit her again, though in an unknown shape. He came, and he beheld her resplendent in all the charms of virtue and of beauty. He left her once more to the exercise of those qualities in which he had found her so richly adorned, and returned again to offer up at her feet the homage due to her many and unequalled virtues, to her constancy and tenderness!—— Juliana,” he added, throwing himself at her feet, and parting back a profusion of dark bright hair, “ Juliana——
I am he!!!”

CHAPTER X.

———Call me Werner still,
You may yet know me by a loftier title.

Werner, a Tragedy.

“How cruel, and how unjust,” thought Lady Montgomery, as she seated herself upon a grassy knoll, from which she might command a portion of the surrounding scenery, “it was of Miss Hyndford and her friends to take advantage of Madrake’s eccentricity of manner, to implicate him in the murder of that infirm old man, M’Pech;—and yet, so susceptible are our weak minds of even the most trifling and vacillating impressions, I confess I feel within me a certain vague feeling of uneasiness, as if the morality of my own character had suffered merely by the very report—But what is this?” for at that moment Lady Montgomery saw the object

of her soliloquy carry the lifeless form of Lady Juliana down a shelve of rocks, and approach the extreme edge of the river beneath.

The degree of terror which she experienced, together with a feeling not altogether removed from remorse, at her own rash imprudence in having, under existing circumstances, trusted him so far, rendered Lady Montgomery at once paralyzed and motionless.

Her eyes, however, continued to follow the motions of Madrake, whose tall commanding figure now concealed from her the more delicate form of her daughter, and whom she already expected to see consigned, and for ever, to the waters which both seemed now to have approached.

But she saw him lave her pale forehead as he held her half-bending over the brink, and, gradually recovering her from the swoon into which she seemed to have fallen, place her once more in safety upon the adjoining bank. Lady Montgomery's first sensation was that of thankfulness; her next, that he had confessed himself the murderer. He had never on

any occasion aspired to the affections of the Lady Juliana; but he had been very assiduous for some time back in insinuating himself into her confidence; and perhaps the service he had just performed with respect to Miss Hyndford, might have tempted him to repose more implicitly upon their protection. “I must save Juliana,” she exclaimed, “from the misfortune of assisting, through any motives of compassion or benevolence, in his villany—if such an instance of deception and duplicity were possible!” And Lady Montgomery began to descend as well as she could towards the spot where the objects of her anxiety were stationed.

“Juliana!” said Madrake, in that tone of plaintive tenderness with which he had once used to address her; and he helped to assist her now returning strength, in raising her from the rustic bench on which he had placed her to rest.

“My dear Walter! My dear brother!” and throwing herself wildly upon his neck, Lady Juliana gave, in the language of *Le Sage*, a free course to her tears.

“ My dear Juliana,” returned her brother, so soon as she had a little recovered from the violence of her agitation ; “ had you no suspicions, then, that I must have been possessed of some secret which could alone concern you and your family ? Did your faithful memory not perceive, as I pronounced your name, some faint resemblance to that voice which had once so fondly addressed you ? ”

“ I felt,” she replied with an effort, “ my soul tremble within me. You needed only to have repeated it once more to have convinced me, that the dead are sometimes permitted to revisit the earth.”

“ I was not then ready, my dear Juliana, and I merely wished to try whether or not my return, after so long an absence, could be acceptable to you. I found, however, that the incidents of our childhood had suffered no deterioration in your recollection ; and that, like me, you cherished a fond and imperishable regard.

“ I wished likewise, in depriving myself of all those tender and endearing sympathies, to expiate more perfectly a fault, for which so many

others suffered, and for which I have, for ten long years, endured the pangs of inextinguishable remorse!—There was no blood shed, Juliana: My heart alone wept blood; and the world has at this moment no wrong of your brother's to resent or redress.—Stay, here comes the Countess. Let us once more embrace, like lovers long betrothed, who meet, and never more to part—my *own* Juliana!

“I will leave you together for a few minutes, Juliana. She is *not* our mother; but wedded in the hour of grief, and too soon destined to become a widow, her kind and generous heart devoted itself alone to you. Look upon her, and say whether or not that fond affectionate heart has merited the gift which it so anxiously and so industriously sought to obtain?” * * * * *

* * * * *

“It is now nearly eleven years ago,” continued Madrake, addressing himself to the Lady Juliana, “since a body, said to be that of the only son of the Earl of Montgomery, was discovered, in the last state of decay, entangled amongst weeds and rushes in the middle of the

river.—That Walter Lord Montgomery had been accidentally drowned, was believed by every person; and the coincidence of a basket with fishing-tackle, &c. being found with the body, also tended, I believe, to confirm the belief. In the grave, then, of this piece of wretched mortality—obtained for the purpose, by myself, from a band of resurrectionists—were deposited the title, name, and dignity—nay, except in the breast of *one* solitary individual, the very memory of the young Lord Montgomery; while there was seen, for the first time upon the earth, that wild and eccentric being who still retains, in the eyes of the world at large, the less worthy appellation of Madrake. In the mean time, to define more particularly the part which destiny ordained that I should play in this extraordinary drama, I shall give you the outline of those events which preceded so signal and extraordinary a catastrophe.

“ My boyhood was spent in the prosecution of those studies which are appointed for the instruction of youth, and in the occasional society of my sister Juliana. The time, however, ap-

proached, in which I was to be left to the management of my own discretion—in which I was to realize all those fond and idolatrous hopes in which a too partial parent already indulged—and in that lone bower which my own hands had reared, I parted from my beloved and only companion.

“ He who has trusted to the first deceitful appearances of life, has he not had leisure to repent of his confidence, and to reproach his credulity? That beautiful day on which I quitted, with a mind oppressed, as it were, with the delighted anticipations of the future, the elegant retreat of Champ Fleury—that day, on which I appeared to realize in myself the most sanguine expectations of my family, my friends, and my dependants—proved the first of my subsequent and terrible misfortunes.

“ I pass over the mere detail of events, from which no benefit can be derived; and of persons, in whose career neither of us can, in any way, now feel ourselves interested. That I was early, and perhaps too easily betrayed, ruined, sacrificed! you are already prepared, I believe, to

suspect. It happened so, partly by the fault of my own unthinking imprudence; and partly by means of some of those unfortunate accidents and coincidences which sometimes occur even to the most circumspect. I became involved in debt—debt! that monster with a simple name, from which the worst evils that blight and cancer the hopes of life originate; and from which, with a few exceptions, the greater sum of human misfortunes proceed;—that frequent parent of

“ Impenitent remorse ;

That juggling fiend, who never spoke before—

But cries ‘ I warn’d thee !’ when the deed is o’er.”

“ The frequent cause of young men’s first misfortunes—of misfortunes which too often end in crimes—will be found, I suspect, in the want of that familiar and kindly intercourse which has hitherto continued to subsist between a parent and his child. It is when placed by circumstances beyond the reach of his personal advice and assistance, that a father, whatever may be his own particular habits, temper, or opinions, ought most to cherish an easy, fearless,

and unreserved communication on the part of his children.

“ The first faults of a son are frequently concealed, principally because the party offended is unable to disguise or to forgive the occasion of his sorrow and displeasure. The only being who can properly rectify the evil committed is thus set aside, or, more properly speaking, deceived; and the delinquent, agitated at one time by terror, and at another time by passion, generally leaves his fate to the destiny of chance. Like the weeds that inundate, in spring-time, the fairest and richest cultivations, there is a time when a parent ought to expect that a few stray seeds will expand among the blossoms of better promise; and he must be careful that, in too rudely disuniting them, he does not destroy both.

“ I was beloved, I was adored, by my father; and yet he was the only person in whom, in the moment of trouble, I dared not to confide. His severity, if ever exercised, I knew could not be lasting: his reason was capable of appreciating the force of those circumstances which had led

to my transgression; and his goodness of heart was inclined to reward the sincerity of a full and undisguised disclosure. And yet, he was the only being to whom I could never appeal. He had *trusted* me, and the sufferings which so intense a disappointment was calculated to create, were too much for my courage to inflict. He did not consider that the young are most liable to error, or that a creature whom he had hitherto found excellent in his conduct, should fall at last beneath the repetition of so many temptations. Fatal confidence! which, by exacting the utmost perfection of moral conduct, was rewarded by its destruction!

“To proceed:—I began to feel something of the distractions of a condition in which nothing but the very depraved can find themselves at their ease. My hours of happiness became shorter and more uncertain, my nights of terror more frequent. I was entangled, like my contemporaries, in all the giddy variety of folly and pleasure. The dignity of my rank had hitherto kept away those wealthy accommodators of the needy, when an accident brought my fortune to

a crisis. I had staked my honour to apply the money that was now torn from me by more needy or more impatient creditors, to the liquidation of some gambling debts due to my perhaps equally harassed companions. It is dangerous to trust to the generosity of others; it is still more dangerous to defer that same humiliating experiment till necessity has shut out all other means of assistance. My applications and appeals to the humanity of friends were unsuccessful. I hesitated a while between pride and shame. The former pointed out suicide, the latter a full acknowledgment of my necessities. For neither of these extremes was my mind, however, prepared. To preserve my word sacred, to secure what I took to be honour, became a passion to which, in its excess, I felt almost prepared to sacrifice my innocence. My confusion and distraction increased with my difficulties. My mind indulged the most wild and extraordinary expedients. I became frantic. My madness and desperation united to hurry me on; and in a moment of delirium, excited

chiefly by the fumes of intoxication, I——committed forgery !

“ I had no intentions in this to wrong or defraud the individual whose name I had counterfeited. I merely wanted to save my *honour*, and to obtain time for the completion of certain negotiations with the money lenders, into whose hands I was about to consign myself ; for the lateness of my application, and the haste which I betrayed, had cautioned these harpies against too speedily coming to my assistance.

“ I had no sooner reaped the reward of my adventurous dexterity, than all the horrors of such a transaction, and its consequences, presented themselves, like the scaffold of the murderer, to my affrighted senses. I felt that, in destroying the morality of my character, I had struck a blow more fatal than the assassin's knife. I was a suicide, who still lived to contemplate the effects of his own destruction !

“ Scared and terrified, and seeing in every surrounding object a gibbet on which I must soon expiate my fault, I had yet strength to seek out the person into whose hands I was now will-

ing to consign my life. He had the humanity to preserve it, as well as the generosity to get all trace of the deed destroyed. Like the last act in some theatrical performance, some expressions, nay even some sensations of joy, were to be expressed at the miraculous circumstance of my salvation. With these, however, my happiness was destined to finish. The crime, for which hundreds had died on the scaffold, *had been committed*. In spite of the good fortune that had attended my escape, I was still a malefactor, who lived to witness others perish for the same crime, from the punishment of which I alone seemed to have escaped.

“ The most remarkable feature in my character, some traces of which you may still recollect, was a degree of delicacy and sensibility, which, like the pure surface of an immaculate gem, was to be affected by the faintest and slightest impressions.

“ ‘ I am formed to feel any slur that is cast upon me, not like a wound, but like fifty mortal swords, each of them striking at something infinitely beyond my life.’ This exquisite sense

of rectitude had had its foundation in pride. I had been compelled to humble myself to the very dust, and yet the cause of that humiliation remained. It had had a witness; and that reputation which, in the midst of a thousand follies, I had been so anxious to preserve, was at the mercy of one, whom time, chance, interest, or vanity, might tempt to crush and blast. The darkness of the tomb had closed upon my sight. It revealed nothing but the darker prospect of future shame and eternal degradation. I had robbed, too, a father of his only son. I had stolen from a youthful sister a brother, the friend of her heart, the object of her kindest and most innocent affections. Death had thinned the ranks of our family connexions, and I had plucked the remaining branch forth by the root. In a word, I had dishonoured my name, my lineage, and my family. A fictitious innocence might be supported; but was not my crime now identified with my conscience, inseparable from my existence? Could I ever resume those looks of pride which had been quenched by my crime? Could that darkened eye, which the sun of

heaven was no longer to enlighten, benefit, or cheer, find any satisfaction in again contemplating that delightful home, from which my own misconduct had separated me? Could my remorse-torn soul again seek to reapproach that lovely Juliana, whose parting tears must now be answered by so much shame and so much unmerited dishonour? How could my tongue excuse those altered looks, which already told me that I must never again hope to experience the gift of happiness? Could I appear contented, happy, when I knew, when I *felt*, that the morality of my character was irrevocably destroyed?

“ Every person, I have reason to believe, has in his youth committed some *one* action for which he must always have to reproach himself. Yet we find that his individual prosperity, or even happiness, has neither been long interrupted nor retarded. With me it was different. Without referring to the exalted character of my rank, or the dignity of my own personal condition, I felt that a man’s reputation, like that of Cæsar’s wife, should not only be faultless,

but that he should also be free from any *outré* or particular idiosyncrasy of character or behaviour. That I had committed a crime for which others had been condemned, and were perhaps at that very moment undergoing the utmost rigour of the law, was a situation no longer reconcileable with the former nice and fastidious disposition of my mind; in a word, incompatible with the genius of my former existence.—I determined to sacrifice my family, my fortune, and my name; to renounce that splendid inheritance which I had so much and so often prized; and to seek, under the aspect of some new character, the future means of subsistence.

“ I had always loathed, with the exception of those moments in which my despair had assumed the character of insanity, the idea of a Roman death. To fly in search of an asylum to some remote and distant country, seemed laden with all the dangers of discovery and disgrace. Chance had secured me the confidence of one of those persons who assist the studies of medical men by their depredations among the dead,

and to whom I passed myself off—now since the period for deception was arrived—as a student of that profession. The body which he procured was secreted in a place convenient for my purpose. I hastily transferred to it my ordinary habiliments; and in a few weeks all trace of its identity became necessarily extinguished. I had already been seen to set out on a fishing expedition, from which I had announced to my servants that I should return on the following day; but, muffled up in an old travelling cloak, I was soon lost amid the crowds and multitudes of the southern metropolis.

“ In this situation, like that of St Leon on his escape from the *auto da fe* in the streets of Madrid, I altered the aspect of my whole external appearance. I had been accustomed to dress in a style of the most finished elegance. I changed to a plain and sober make, in which there was nothing done either to please or to ornament. I had begun to wear mustachios, and my head was embellished with a profusion of thick and clustering locks. The first I took away; the second I cropped close,

up to the day on which I again visited the domain of Champ Fleury. I had already written to my father a letter, in which I acknowledged all my difficulties and involvements; and, recommending to his patronage and consideration a Mr Theophilus Madrake, to whom I pretended to be under very important, though somewhat secret obligations, I hoped by this device to be able to discharge the greater part of my debts and obligations, and to secure to myself some resources against the time of poverty and need.

“ In an obscure and distant quarter of the city I awaited the effect which my pretended death was to have upon my father and yourself. I awaited it in horror. I struggled through the long and tedious hours of day, in the same manner as a person on whom already presses the relentless hand of death; and in the stiller silence of the night my pillow was watered by my tears.

“ Often have I attempted to stop, by my presence, the useless sighs of sorrow and regret, and as often has my purpose been interrupted

by the recollection of my fault. Often have the smiling pastures of Champ Fleury and its beautiful gardens visited my dreams ; and the remembrance of my beloved Juliana represented her again to my aching sight ! Often have I implored her forgiveness in the silence of midnight, or lamented our eternal separation, in all the agony of inconsolable despair and inconsolable remorse.

“ At last the public papers informed me of the extent of the calamity which had happened to our house. They spoke of my father as a strong and powerful oak, now felled and broken to the earth ; and indulged in lavish commendations on the virtues and accomplishments of myself, the supposed deceased.

“ I began to suspect, on perusing these calamitous details, that I was sacrificing the happiness of others only the better to preserve myself, and had almost resolved to return once more to my paternal roof, when I discovered that a considerable portion of the world looked upon my death as any thing but accidental ; and, amongst the rest, though he still continued to preserve

my secret, the person to whom I had been indebted for my life. A suspicion like this, so derogatory to that high and immaculate principle of honour which I esteemed essential to existence, determined me; and I continued to endure all the sufferings of misery without any further attempts at relief. I was afterwards informed, too, that my father's extreme affliction had at length assumed the character of resignation; and that he had latterly added to his domestic happiness by a marriage with a much esteemed friend and relation of my mother's;—that his daughter Lady Juliana had proved herself a means of consolation;—and that he never entertained, at any time, any doubts as to the occasion, or any suspicions as to the circumstances, of my pretended death.

“I had already stated myself in my new character, as a merchant whose finances had been, by some unforeseen circumstances, considerably embarrassed, yet who had found means of rendering himself of use to the young Lord Montgomery. My father transmitted to me a considerable sum of money, without inquiring into

the precise nature of the obligations to which his late son's communication referred; and expressed, in a letter which he addressed to me in his own hand, his desire to be of still greater benefit to me. As a further testimony of his affection for my memory, and of his earnest gratitude towards one whom I appeared to be so very anxious to oblige, he bequeathed me at his death—which happened about a year afterwards—a small property, which I afterwards disposed of to considerable advantage.

“ A residence of several years in the valleys of Switzerland and Italy; the change that had, even in the course of nature, taken place in my external manners and appearance; and, above all, the death of the only witness to the crime which the workings of the devil, more than the inclinations of my own genius, had led me to perpetrate, at length restored me to my country.

“ I had, as Walter Lord Montgomery, paid the forfeit of my imprudence; as Theophilus Madrake, I had conducted myself with propriety, if not with eclat; and I felt myself almost

entitled, as it were, to take my place once more amongst the better classes of my countrymen. I did not, however, pretend to act the part of a *distingué*. I preferred rather to gratify the benevolent dispositions of my heart, as well as my curiosity, and to mix more largely with all conditions of men.—In order to avoid the necessity of declining a personal interview with my father, I had announced my intention of going immediately abroad; and, as he supposed that I might possibly require his assistance, he had furnished me with several letters of introduction and recommendation. I took advantage of these letters on my return to my native country, (where, luckily, I had never been permitted either to visit or to associate with my family connexions), to mix in those fashionable circles in which the mind, being released from the necessity of any particular occupation or employment, is permitted leisure to attend to all the elegancies and refinements of life. I indulged in a higher motive. I wished to contemplate your prosperity; to feast my thoughts with the spec-

tacle of your virtues and accomplishments; and to watch over your happiness and your interests, as the future though disguised occupation of my existence.

“ An accident, which I neither attempted to accelerate or prevent, introduced me, for the first time after our separation, to your presence; and I experienced, beneath the inhospitable roof of the Aloofs, a sensation of pleasure, which recompensed me, I may say, for all the tortures I had once endured. Need I add, that I felt within me an emotion which no human voice has ever been able to express? Like the diamond, which even in the dark catches the rays of light which shine from a distance, my heart reflected back upon my wandering recollection those unutterable sensations of tenderness and love, which had once made bright the days of our mutual childhood and youth!

“ I was happy enough, however, to be able to disguise these inward yearnings of my fond affection, and which, after a separation of ten long years, might have been excused for being importunate, and to support my lately attained

character for originality and independence.— That I should have been so fortunate as to please so amiable a person as the Countess, while it gratified my feelings, awakened in me a newly-felt desire of contemplating you in the bosom of that home, from which, like a sheep wandering from the fold, I had been so long lost, and so long estranged. I wished also to please myself with the contemplation of all that my boyhood had so much loved, and which I had so fondly, so sadly, and so frequently regretted. I penetrated, as you must have observed, into all your pastimes and avocations. I accompanied you in those favourite walks, in which I had myself been once your conductor. My mind recalled, in bright succession, all the most pleasing and delightful events of my youth; and, in yon lone bower, enthroned amid the sublimities of nature, I pronounced, in a long forgotten voice, that name which, in the days of former endearment, I had loved so much to cherish and repeat. That voice awakened and revived the memory of the past; and I saw that your thoughts were recalled once

more to the period of our former companionship. This spectacle, which discovered to me traces of that sorrow which only slumbered in the lapse of time, and which proved to me the force of that affection which had survived so many changes, drew tighter the ties of consanguinity about my heart, and determined me to intrust you one day with the secret history of my life. Subsequent events, united with the ardour of my impatience, have hastened the *dénouement*; and I have now little more to add to the story of my past vicissitudes.

“ I had busied myself, in the meanwhile, in promoting as much as possible the interests of my friends, and in partaking, as far as prudence could dictate, in all the pleasures of society. My perhaps too late acquired knowledge of human nature, and of human conduct; my contempt for faction and political consequence; the well-known independence of my sentiments; and my constant desire to increase, so far as lay in my power, the happiness and prosperity of the world at large, gained me the possession of that intelligence, of which, I trust, I have been able

to understand the advantage. From my casual acquaintance with Mr Inverary, and a little management in some other quarter, I was enabled to trace and detect the machinations of Miss Hyndford, and her counsellor Monsieur Diabolique, to defraud you of a considerable portion of your estate, as well as to promote the future advancement of some others of my favourites. In the same manner have I been enabled—though I did nothing from interested motives—to keep my eye upon the fortunes of that unhappy piece of mortality, M'Pech, with whom we are somehow or other connected. In this claim, I was forced to pretend some affinity to the noble house of Montgomery—a presumption which, I believe, may almost in my case be forgiven; but the well-known antipathy of that person luckily interrupted all attempts at further investigation. My claims were heard, and at the same time as promptly dismissed. My rejection, however, in depriving Mr M'Pech of the comfort of an heir-at-law, left him in such a state of indecision and uncertainty with respect to the final appointment of his successor, as

served in the end best to promote my interests. He has never been able to prevail with himself to assign away his effects; and the event of his death—the true circumstances of which have been already presented to the public—has at last deprived him of the power. That this new epoch in my fortunes should have hastened, instead of retarding, the moment for my discovering myself, will not appear to you very surprising, when it is recollected how well I withstood so many former temptations, and how well I resisted the all-powerful yearnings of affection and of love!”

CHAPTER XI.

Ross. Will you to Scone?

Macd. No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

Ross. Well, I will thither.

Macd. Well, may you see things well done there ;—Adieu !
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new !

SHAKSPEARE.

THE true cause of old M'Pech's uncomfortable defalkment arose in a quarter with which, as it is the nature of man ever to shew the better side, our readers have been hitherto unacquainted. In addition to the crowd of new sprung relations—amongst whom we have already reckoned the Lumsdaines, the Edmonstones, Mr Madrake, and Mrs Fife—there arose a separate set, who laid claim without ceremony to still nearer connexionship. It is said that, soon after the breaking out of the French

Revolution, there issued forth a multitude of persons on whom the sun of heaven had never been seen to shine, and who very probably had never been heard of before; in like manner did the ostentatious acknowledgment of Mr M'Pech's good fortune call forth an abundance of renegades and wretches, whose newly awakened dignities could boast of nought, if we would subtract the merit of his imagined alliance. This horde, like the Huns in the reign of Valentinian, at least made themselves be heard; and as this newly exalted idol had but little relish for the more refined manners of the accomplished votaries of fashionable life, perhaps the weak old man rather leaned to the least respectable side of his connexions. To verify, however, more completely the saying, that "when a nation boils, the scum gets upmost," the stir which the reputation of Mr M'Pech's wealth occasioned, certainly awoke the slumbering energies of one who, but for that, might have slept in peace.

The evil spirit thus conjured up was confined within the person of a young and bold,

though somewhat illiterate female. This inspired maiden had somewhat easily obtained the favour of Mr M'Pech's illustrious *factotum*, Nelly Sampson, who had willingly proved the lady in waiting to all that gentleman's left-handed would-be relations; and she had also insinuated herself not a little into the favour of M'Pech himself. From such beginnings, then, had our heroine laid the foundation of a marriage, which would enable her to manage her fortune free from all the dangers and difficulties of opposition. But for this dispensing happiness the fates had not exactly destined her. There was ever a simplicity and stupidity in the manners of M'Pech, which had sometimes the effect, like Napoleon's marble look, of throwing back the intentions of the speaker upon herself, and that without any exertion of labour or fatigue. Mr M'Pech certainly saw not her design; but he had an instinctive caution in his composition, which would never at any time suffer him to connive at a change in his condition, which might run even a distant risk of drawing trouble round his house. Foiled in this attempt,

her next endeavour was to get herself properly introduced into the settlement, which M'Pech had at last consented to undertake, chiefly for the sake of defrauding his proper heir Madrake. No better success, however, awaited her. She saw herself included in a long list of five-and-twenty pound legatees, with the addition of a suit of mournings, in consideration of her services towards her patroness, Nelly Sampson;—for whom, again, in her deaf and dumb years, the generosity of M'Pech had provided, in addition to her legacy, the opportunity of spending it in a free house—while, in return to her less reserved suggestions on the subject, she was usually answered with such edifying and gratifying replies as, “Na na, a fu' cup's ill to haud;” “fools shouldna hae chappin-sticks,” &c. &c. &c. all drawn and subtracted from that coinage of ready-made wit, which the Caledonians are said to enjoy under the common designation of “Scotch Proverbs;”—for Mr M'Pech was one of those canny worthies, who had no objections whatever to exclaim, in the language of the satirist,—

“ Content I’ll keep the way I’m in,
And slumber in a whole calf’s skin.”

Unable, therefore, to alter the tactics of a man, who had found it so much to his advantage to reject whatever interfered with or intruded upon his own jog-trot policy, and who thought it time, perhaps, to keep steady in the plans which he henceforth intended to pursue, the friend and companion of Nelly Sampson was filled with revenge.

In a state of half hope and half frenzy she put the pen into his hand, while laying breathless in bed, and commanded him to write out a codicil to his will—(which, like the property to which it alluded, Mr M’Pech would not suffer a moment from his sight)—such as she should dictate. Irritated, it is supposed, by the effects of his disease, and surprised out of his ordinary prudence, the old man forgot to temporize; and, in a fit of spleen, he drew his pen through the name which had just given him so much cause of offence.

The object of his present resentment was not in a temper to submit to such a rebuke, and she

made a spring at the testamentary code itself. But M'Pech was prepared for that, as he was for all other stratagems; and he contrived to snatch aside the prize in view, just as she had made the effort to obtain it. This mark of his seldom exerted dexterity, however, did not prove, as shall be seen, so very beneficial to his subsequent interests. His antagonist, with the rage of an inspired tigress, now attempted to possess herself of the document by force. M'Pech could only struggle; but, finding that his efforts were not enough, and that the enemy gained ground, he struck her, like an expiring tyrant, with all his remaining strength.

The consequences were fatal. Suddenly abandoning all designs and attempts upon the original cause of quarrel, his enraged opponent now directed her fury towards M'Pech's exhausted frame; and, instigated by disappointment and revenge, as well as excited by passion, she conferred upon his feeble and wasted frame the death of another Desdemona. The cause of contention, which the hand of death had alone forced him to relinquish, she consigned to the

flames, before his last long groan had subsided into the stillness of eternal death.

Such were the circumstances of the murder, as attested by those whom the cries of the expiring wretch, united to the screams of his less able domestic, had brought to the spot—attested, too, by the subsequent confession of the murderess herself.

The sad exhibition, however, which the enacting of this tragedy promised to get up, was luckily prevented by the unfortunate delinquent going mad, and dying shortly afterwards from the effects of her desperation and despair.—

We now resume the path (from which we have so unprofitably diverged, it would appear) of our narrative; in the course of which we shall have soon to put on record the history of another demise, which, though less terrible in its abstract aspect, may not appear, however—considering the lengths some persons are carried in search of gain—less extraordinary.

How often do we set aside a particular season, which is to prove, we imagine, the scene of our own individual happiness and prosperity; and

how often, like the backs of the pictures which Augustus set to auction for his pastime, does that one particular season prove a blank, which, if it exhibit any thing, exhibits only disappointment, and the experience of our own imbecility, shortsightedness, and folly !

Colonel Brown, to whom the winter had been rendered particularly tempestuous,—principally on account of his rather unpopular match with the celebrated Mademoiselle Antoinette ; the consequent cold calculations of the Club ; and the consequent opportunity (to the letter taken advantage of) afforded to the noble family of Aloof to shake itself clear of all former obligations,—had, however, promised himself the exquisite felicity of a “ young man returning into youth,” in the following summer. But the summer, as if to retard the day of bliss, had brought nothing but faults to be remedied, and inconveniencies to be rectified, in his unique cottage ornée ; together with a history of the final demise of his son-in-law, the neither “ here nor there” Mr Augustus Maringle. The autumn,

therefore, must be the favoured period for the grand development of delights. His cottage ornée was finished; his wife had proved just the sort of foolish woman or *daw*, that he most liked; and he had got rid of a sick son-in-law, from whom no particular satisfaction was henceforward to be expected. He might also indulge his long-cherished inclination for a safety gun, with other sports both in and out of the field; while his daughter might be esteemed young enough, and rich enough—at least during his life—to be able a second time, as he hoped, to provide for herself.

“ ’Tis downright obstinate in folks to die,
Who have for every ill a remedy.”

With these prospects and ideas in his brain, Colonel Brown, in the third week of August, was visited by an apoplectic fit, which on the third day extinguished his earthly, and it may be his heavenly, career:—An event, which relieved huge Lady Lumberfield of any suspicions which she might have entertained of his ambition, and its effects; and afforded to the

Aloofs the singular happiness of having eternally got rid of a man, whom they had so long been condemned to endure; and who had, still more of late, given them occasion to dislike his intimacy and acquaintance:—An event which constituted Mrs Maringle, once the heiress, now the tenant or liferentrix of Bertie; and astonished Mrs Fife, who, in her curiosity to know what was to be the future character of his life under the auspices of our quondam friend Mademoiselle Antoinette, had apparently forgot that there *was* such a thing as an unexpected descent into the grave, by persons not only possessed of all the appearance, but, in fact, of the reality of health. For so, as in Colonel Brown's particular case, it fell out.

But what was now the fate of Mrs Augustus Maringle, the daughter? she who, as the only child and heiress of the defunct proprietor of Bertie, had discovered so great a fund of selfishness, as had taught the world to regret that so much power should have fallen into such ill hands. Unluckily for her, her step-mother, the *ex* Mademoiselle Antoinette, was also re-

markably selfish. The law, if we are not mistaken, generously takes in hand to look after the worldly interests of such ladies as have the misfortune to be allied to men who have foolishly calculated that they should live beyond them. Mademoiselle Antoinette must be provided for. The West India fortune, with the assistance of the Messrs Regular, who had likewise been employed by Colonel Brown in the Lumberfield transaction, had been squandered or lost. Neither coal nor lime had been found on the Bertie property; farmers were petitioning, without rest or intermission, for a still further reduction of rent; and there had also been buried, along with her late husband, the full pay of a Lieutenant-Colonel in the army, as well as a few other "odds and ends" of pensions and annuities. Still and on, Mademoiselle Antoinette must be provided for; and Mrs Maringle must bear the weight of all these defalcating casualties, as well as the honours to which she had now, perhaps very untimeously, succeeded. To add to all other calamities, Mademoiselle Antoinette, with her marriage, had regained her

youth. In fact, she began to appear pretty and handsome for the first time in her life—in particular, she looked very becoming in her new mourning weeds; and, what was still better, she seemed suddenly to have acquired an extreme predilection for that style of dress.

This last accident, more than any thing else, brought Mrs Maringle's envy and jealousy to a head. She would fasten down and circumscribe Mrs Brown's income at the point of the law: And Mrs Brown, glorying in the opportunity of revenging herself upon the former insolencies of her refractory pupil, would answer her with similar weapons—in other words, would ride in spite upon the very top of her commission.

Who can touch pitch and not be defiled? Once in the hands of the law, the law will not prove itself either indifferent or unworthy of the trust. The ladies were cajoled over to undertake things foreign to their original purpose, and to attempt things to which they had no feasible right; and female obstinacy, female pride, female hate, has prolonged the contest, till neither Mrs Brown, nor her daughter Mrs Maringle,

have got much income to boast. To complete matters, Mrs Brown will, in the mean time, take up her abode at Castle Bertie itself! while Mrs Maringle, now grown old and withered, and the legality of her income ever since the part she had played at Lumberfield somewhat doubted, is obliged to pass the remainder of her days in some cheap sea-bathing corner, in comparative poverty and contempt.

The Lumsdaines are the next examples of the fickleness of fortune. The elder sister had married ill, and the younger ones had married worse; their brother, on whom so much flattery had been lavished, and from whom so much had been—(whether wisely or not, we will not say)—expected, had been found dead one morning in bed.

This latter event had been followed by one of still more importance to the public, and this was neither more nor less than the demise of the industrious and useful Mr Tinto; whose death had been rather untimely occasioned by a squeeze from the accidental capsizing of a set of six immense pictures, destined

for the completion of that place of doubt, at any rate of speculation, the Hyndford gallery.

Much farther up the scale are to be seen the deeds and acts of Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, and that archangel of *ton*, the notorious Monsieur Diabolique.

Miss Hyndford, in spite of the expenses of her coach and four, had increased, and was still increasing, the main bulk of her fortune; and Monsieur, probably aware of this, seemed at last inclined to turn the whole into a countess-ship.

But Miss Hyndford had cunning, and, in particular, distrust equal to that of Monsieur Diabolique in her own way; and though she professed herself always very unwilling to *lose* the Count, she would neither consent to settle her fortune upon him, nor in a matrimonial way would she even condescend to settle it upon herself. Monsieur Diabolique, though he publicly sacrificed to her the loves of the frozen Miss Lætitia Alicia, was a foreigner, and *might* be a swindler. That he neither was, nor could be any thing of the kind, may be gathered from that distinguished

society in which he is still seen to mix. Still and on, Miss Hyndford seemed determined that *she* at least should not run the risk of the possibility of his ever discovering through time any symptoms or traces of *rouéism*; and though she displayed, as we have seen, every art to retain him as her cicisbeo, she eluded, with true female dexterity, the misfortune of subjecting herself unnecessarily to the good or evil dispositions, good or ill temper, of another; in particular, of one who might, even out of whim, choose to endanger her happiness, if not her respectability, under pretext of a husband's law, will, or authority.

Into all the most secret and outré ramifications of this policy, Monsieur Diabolique's sagacity, as might be imagined, quickly penetrated; and he adapted himself, accordingly, to its author's predetermined wishes and intentions. He assumed, in virtue of this strategie, the character with which Miss Hyndford was, of all others, the best satisfied—namely, that of a professed admirer, whom she might marry when she chose; and who would never, while he abandoned every

body else for her favour, annoy her with any peremptory or explicit applications for her heart and hand. Monsieur Diabolique, gentle readers, instead of suing for a marriage with the lady, rather placed his expectations in her death. He calculated on her ten long years of seniority,—which, taking into consideration the habits and constitution of the sex in general, might be averaged at twenty,—and upon the many chances which Miss Hyndford, in her love of gaiety and dress, would necessarily afford for shortening, by the help of an accommodating cold, the gross period of her career. Monsieur Diabolique hoped, in the mean time, by fomenting, through means of private agents, those occasional feuds which interrupt the peace of all well regulated families, to get her at last to detest all her relations; and so make the way to riches the smoother for himself. Or it might be, that failing, through means of the lady's own watchful suspicions, in this scheme, he should still reserve for himself the opportunity of profiting by that second childhood of love, as well as of every thing else, which sometimes de-

termines aged women to abandon that liberty which they have hitherto so perseveringly managed to retain. To finish Monsieur Diabolique's design, he hoped for the pleasure of preventing Miss Hyndford's marriage with any body else ; while he, too, remained free to desert her, should there be need ; and to pursue, should he ever incline so, his own advantage in some other quarter. In this enviable situation, time and the seasons require that we should now leave Miss Hyndford of Hyndshaw, and the much celebrated and highly-gifted Machiavel, Monsieur St Malin Diabolique.

In a similar manner, probably in imitation of the illustrious author of *Waverley*, must we hurry over the achievements of the remaining actors in our drama, satisfied that there is, for the present, but little further amusement, and still less instruction (if any can be imagined), in a longer inquisition into their behaviour and adventures. The stern Aloofs pass on, unloving and unloved. The Maringles are grown out of date. The Horn Regulars and Methodicals

continue their journey in the same style of precise and punctilious regularity. Messrs Vonpepper and M'Ginger have adjourned to a clime a little better suited to their fiery temperament. Mrs Dudd and Mrs Hochytoch are as well—considering that the one has just given birth to his father's double, while the other has securely, or rather *safely* buried her husband—as might be expected: And Messrs Suttie, Hyndford, Terrorfield and Company, continue still to illumine the less lustrous bodies of our northern metropolis. Lord Liberality is again gone to Court; and Lord Fiddle-faddle to his eternal rest—having fatally risked his pigmy powers in the removal of a large globe of platina, which he had unwisely undertaken to transfer from one of his old mineral cabinets, to its place in the grand M'Farlane Repository; his affection for which, having rather violently vomited blood, he was now permitted the happiness of attesting with that same precious liquid.

Amongst the living, however, we may yet notice the reappearance of young Edmonstone at the bar of public as well as of polite life; intro-

duced by the Right Honourable the Earl of Montgomery, the most humane, and, at the same time, the most intelligent and accomplished nobleman of the day;—whose nuptials, by the way, have been already celebrated with the amiable Miss Leslie, the benefactress of her family, and the stay and comfort of Mrs Fife.

Mrs Fife ! that oft-repeated and celebrated name ! which, like that of Montrose, can of itself awake the slumbering love and enthusiasm of distant novel readers, and the curious about nothings—Mrs Fife ! that name which the Lady Juliana loves to pronounce in the circle of her beloved friends, herself the as yet unclaimed star of loveliness and light ; and which great vast eternal Lady Lumberfield, when the present generation shall be forgot, is still destined to remember and regret—Mrs Fife, with whom, maugre our duty to the Lairds, it was our favoured fortune to begin, we have now thought it our duty to end—Mrs Fife, then, exhausted by her moral as well as by her physical activity, upon the second anniversary of her antagonist Colonel Brown's demise, prepared,

in like manner, to meet her death. We have somewhere before observed, that, amidst all her follies, this lady retained a just sense of the decorums of life. In the maintenance of her dignity as proprietrix of Fife-hall and its surrounding territories, (to which she had now for the last time adjourned), Mrs Fife had acquired the praises, not only of those who remembered the ancient importance of the Fifes, and enjoyed her own personal acquaintance, but of persons of a condition surpassing that of the fastidious families of the Horn Regulars and Methodicals, Lady Elizabeth Nonsuch, (Miss Hyndford's active correspondent while at Champ Fleury), or even the Hyndfords themselves, great and mighty as they always thought themselves.

Having performed her duty, which, in some persons, is almost unavoidably identified with their consequence, so long as the performance of that duty could in any way add to the reputation and happiness of her temporal state, Mrs Fife now turned her attention towards the objects which more dearly concerned her own private feelings and affections.

It was, then, when satisfied, not so much that she should die, as that she should never regain the possession of her former strength and vigilance, that Mrs Fife, having summoned the Messrs Clearbrains and Kittlesculd to her chamber, prepared to dispose *post mortem* of that source of splendour, as well as of speculation, Fife-hall.

Mrs Fife held in her hand the tree of pedigree, upon the branches of which she conferred the last inquisition of dying wonder and expiring curiosity.

“It is just as I suspected,” she exclaimed; “young Logan’s grandmother and my mother were cousins,—the children of sisters as we see, and, by consequence, descended from one and the same original. He is the person, then, with the exception of a certain legacy in favour of the young Lady Montgomery, and an annuity to Miss Eliza M’Tavish, to whom I desire, as heretofore, that my whole property shall descend. Can Madrake—I mean Lord Montgomery—have found it out, I wonder, that he

was in such a hurry to marry him to his friend Miss Edmonstone?"

The Messrs Clearbrains and Kittlescull continued to fill up the blanks left formerly in her will, for the insertion of Miss M'Tavish's annuity and young Lady Montgomery's legacy, both saved through Mrs Fife's economy out of the rental of the Fife-hall estates, the ever memorable baronies of Fiddler and Eppie.

"It is needless, gentlemen, to deprive a poor dying woman of so small a satisfaction. I *must* know how Lord Montgomery came to the knowledge of my last will and intentions."

"Perhaps Lord Montgomery will be best able to explain matters himself; and you know, Ma'am, he returns next week." The elder partner paused; a mumbled sound seemed to issue from the bed, which accused Lord and Lady Montgomery of having gone off, not to regulate their own private affairs, but to be present at the marriage of the Lady Juliana, whom a vague report had just betrothed to a young and splendid nobleman. The next moment it ceased, and a stillness followed, which could

only succeed to the final extinction of Mrs Fife.

“ Brother,” said Mr Clearbrains, turning to his coadjutor, the dexterous and cogitating Mr Kittlescull, “ I am afraid we have let slip, if not the last of the Lairds, at least the last of the Fifes.”

THE END.

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